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January 6, 2009

Hon. Gerry Ritz
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Sir John Carling Building
930 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5

Dear Minister Ritz,

The recent Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Director elections have confirmed strong support for the single desk marketing advantages of the CWB. The elections have also confirmed strong support for the concept of farmer control of the CWB, especially given that the voter turnout was nearly equal to the turnout of the recent federal general election.

Given farmers' strong support for farmer control and the single desk, I am writing to ask you to take four immediate actions regarding the CWB:

1. Drop your legal appeal regarding the gag order imposed on the Board in 2006. The Federal Court has already ruled that the gag order was not lawful. Appealing the ruling not only wastes more taxpayer money, but contradicts the strong vote of confidence just given to the elected Board of the CWB.
2. Reimburse the farmers of western Canada for the severance package required by your government's firing of Adrian Measner. The severance package was triggered by the firing without cause of Mr. Measner against the expressed written wishes of the Board of Directors of the CWB at the time, and it is not acceptable that your government has made farmers pay this cost. Furthermore, in December of 2007 the House of Commons Agriculture Committee passed a resolution calling on the government to reimburse farmers for this unjust cost.
3. Replace the appointed CWB Directors with Directors chosen by the elected Board members on the basis of expertise. Your government's appointment of Board members who oppose the single desk marketing advantage is out of step with the wishes of western Canadian farmers as recently expressed by the CWB election process.
4. State publicly that the government of Canada will not let our international competitors destroy the single desk marketing advantages of the CWB at the WTO negotiations, and act aggressively to fulfill that declaration. Your government has failed to convince farmers to vote to dismantle the CWB. Similarly, you have failed to win (or even attempt) a vote in the House of Commons to dismantle the CWB. Having failed domestically and democratically to accomplish your aim of destroying farmers' marketing agency, you must not stand idly by and allow foreign governments at the WTO to accomplish that same end.

Yours truly,

Stewart Wells
President
National Farmers Union
(Phone: 306-773-6852)