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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 7th, 2010

NFU CALLS FOR CHANGES TO GREEN ENERGY ACT

St. Marys, Ontario – The National Farmers Union has submitted a letter to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure which calls of the minister to make changes in the Renewable Energy Approvals process under the Ontario Green Energy Act. The NFU is asking the Ontario Government to change the goals and process of the community consultations requirement of the Green Energy Act, so that community concerns are acknowledged and addressed.

In addition, the NFU highlights its fear that continuing to open the doors to large, private renewable energy producers brings with it a risk that most of the financial benefits from renewable energy production will leave the province, rather than stay in the province to benefit farmers, rural communities and the people of Ontario.

“The community consultation process currently carried out by wind developers provides no mechanism for citizens to have their concerns addressed. Community members attending the consultations are more likely to receive a flippant answer or an insulting response from a wind developer than a reasonable discussion of their concerns. For farmers and rural citizens who have legitimate concerns about the impact of industrial wind or solar developments in their backyards, this pseudo-consultation is demeaning and insulting.,” said Ann Slater, St. Marys area farmer and NFU board member.

As part of the community consultation process, the NFU statement says it must be possible to stop projects if community concerns cannot be dealt with to their satisfaction. Slater said, “At this point, farmers and rural residents with concerns about their health, their property values or the loss of control over farm land feel completely helpless – if a industrial wind developer wants to erect a wind farm in their backyard, they feel there is no way to stop it from doing so.”

The Green Energy Act has given all control over the approval of renewable energy projects to the province. The NFU would like to see planning, permitting and zoning powers returned to rural municipalities. This would give rural communities more opportunities to address broader concerns and to potentially negotiate changes for the benefit of the community.

The National Farmers Union believes renewable energy projects must be owned and controlled by local communities and that the profits and benefits of such projects stay in community. Slater noted that Ontario's electricity system was developed for the benefit of the people of Ontario through public ownership of the production and distribution of electrical power. In addition, electricity was sold to consumers at cost. The Green Energy Act offers contracts for renewable power that are far above the amount Ontario electricity consumers now pay for electricity.

Slater said, “Even the small scale microFIT projects being erected by farmers themselves, including

