

Canada: National Farmers Union in Solidarity with Idle No More

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Saskatoon: "The NFU is proud to declare its solidarity with Idle No More, which is bringing people together from across Canada to stop the Harper government from riding roughshod over our collective rights," says Glenn Tait, NFU National Board member. "We want a better Canada."

The NFU is calling for the federal government to fulfill its Constitutional duty to consult and accommodate Aboriginal and Treaty rights and urges the Crown to respect and fulfill the obligations of its Treaties with First Nations. We are all Treaty people.

The NFU gratefully acknowledges the leadership that First Nations people - the first farmers, fisher people, and hunters of this land - have provided in catalyzing a public call to action for environmental and social justice. The NFU, in solidarity with Idle No More and its allies, looks forward to building a society in which our forests, waters, land, and people live and produce in harmony.

In response, Sheelah McLean, one of the founding organizers of the Idle No More movement, says "We are so grateful for the support of groups such as the NFU. This alliance is essential for educating people about how critical it is to have healthy land, food and water."

"Idle No More is not solely about First Nations' concerns," says Tait. "We share common commitments to protecting our precious natural resources - water, earth, air, and people - today and for future generations. Like First Nations, farmers put land at the center of our lives, but none of us will be able to work, grow, and produce if our government abandons its role as protector of our land and water. Nor will Canadians have sovereignty if investment corporations own our farmland."

"Bill C-45 and the omnibus approach to legislation is fundamentally undemocratic and an insult to all Canadians. It is no example of how to accomplish these goals," says Tait. "There has been no broad-based consultation about what is being changed, or whether changes are needed or wanted. Diverse voices and opinions are systematically excluded, committee reviews minimized, and debate quashed. The Harper government talks only to those who agree with its vision for Canada."

Tait believes that Bill C-45, Bill C-38 and other bills are threatening farmers' rights to own the seeds they plant, grow and re-use. Legislative changes are making it harder for farmers to receive the full value of their grain. As evidence, he points to the Harper government's destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board single desk and changes to the authority, structure and budget of the Canadian Grain Commission that have crippled its power to ensure fair grading and measuring.

Tait cites Harper's secretive negotiations of trade deals like CETA and TPP as further evidence of the government's exclusion of not only First Nations, but all Canadians from democratic processes. "The Harper government is handing Canadian sovereignty over to corporations that are not rooted in or committed to anything but capital. If it has its way, these entities will have free reign to pry our lakes and rivers, minerals, forests, soils and seeds out from under us whether we are farmers or First Nations. We will stand together to stop this from happening."

National Farmers Union

P.S.

* <http://www.nfu.ca/story/national-farmers-union-solidarity-idle-no-more>