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November 3, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Office of the Prime Minister  
313-S Center Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Congratulations on your selections for our Government's new cabinet. We believe the Ministers you have selected are strong and form the competent management team that will help guide our country through the uncertain future facing the country and indeed, all Canadians. We are looking forward to working with you as it pertains to international trade and the important role it plays for agriculture and our economy. We are writing to you in Mr. Miller's capacity as Chair of the Conservative Rural Agriculture Caucus and my capacity as past Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food (SCAAF).

Recently, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) wrote you concerning the United States recently imposed country-of-origin labelling (COOL) rules and how Canadian cattle producers are already being negatively impacted by these rules. US packers are currently dictating whether they will accept any Canadian cattle into their slaughter mix, and of course, this is impacting US feedlots and cattle buyers. Prices in Canada are dropping and the COOL policy is causing injury to our farmers, ranchers and feedlot operators. As well, due to the 2003 BSE scare, the beef industry lost markets, many of which remain closed today. CCA is asking you to appoint someone, preferably with cabinet credentials, to be a special beef or red meat envoy to deal with COOL and open up other international markets for Canada's red meat sector.

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COOL is not isolated to the cattle industry however, but is also causing the same kind of negative impact and injury to Canada's hog industry. As you are well aware, these two sectors have had a very difficult time over the past few years. Both cattle and hog producers were hurt by the strong Canadian dollar over the past few years. Feed prices and input costs have also gained considerable strength over the last couple of years pushing most farms into unsustainable losses. On top of that, the cattle industry went through all of the difficulties associated with BSE. Packers have faced an increased regulatory



burden and costs for animal traceability, and SRM removal and disposal. Our beef packers are no longer competitive on the world stage due to these added costs, and are forced to pay less for cattle in Canada as they try to off-load these added expenses.

The livestock industry is one of the largest employers in the country, is the largest market for our feed growers, and is vital to maintaining our rural communities, many of which are located in areas where the only economic activity are the cattle ranches and hog farms that surround them. Agriculture programs do not always provide the necessary stability to this sector due to the continued decline in profitability and reference margins. The solution is to provide a market stimulus by removing barriers to international trade. As you know, both cattle and hogs are dependent on exporting since over half of what we produce in this country is exported as either live animals or chilled meat.

It is imperative that someone within our Conservative Government be tasked with carrying the ball on this file. This person must have the authority to negotiate on behalf of the Government of Canada to access markets as well as coordinate any trade challenges, such as COOL or the European ban on Canadian beef. In addition, with all of the new trade agreements we are negotiating on a bilateral basis and also at the WTO, it is even more important that a red meat envoy be appointed to spearhead the interests of this vital industry. We ask that you sincerely consider implementing this request by CCA.

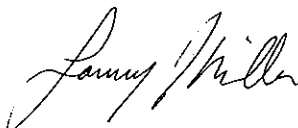
As you are aware, both of us are cattle producers, have served on the SCAAF, have been involved in the development of farm policy and have been strong advocates for the agriculture industry. Both of us have been involved in international trade through our work in Parliament, and in our previous life as producers. Mr. Miller was also a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade. As well, I ran a livestock export company that sold beef to Japan, and breeding stock and genetic materials to the USA and Latin America. As representatives of large livestock producing ridings, coupled with our experience and our vested interests, Mr. Miller and I want to make sure you know that we are very supportive of CCA's suggestion.

We know that livestock producers across this country have always appreciated your firm commitment to the agriculture industry and are hoping our Government will approach this crossroad with the same vigour. Thank you for considering this request and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



James Bezan, MP  
Selkirk Interlake



Larry Millar, MP  
Bruce--Grey--Owen Sound

cc:

- Mr. Guy Giorno, Chief of Staff, Office of the Prime Minister
- Mr. John Masswohl, Director of Government & International Relations  
Canadian Cattlemen's Association

- Mr. Gary Stordy, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator  
Canadian Pork Council
  - The Honourable Stockwell Day, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the  
Asia-Pacific Gateway
  - The Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-foods
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