

February 6th, 2006

Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Building
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Mr. Prime Minister:

I am writing so that I might underscore to you, and the members of your government and Cabinet, the dire situation facing Canadian agriculture, in particular the primary producers engaged in the grains and oilseed sector. Your urgent action on such matters is necessary if we are to prevent this crisis from intensifying and further weakening the overall economy of rural Canada.

While I am now an Opposition M.P., I cannot accept that my job is simply to criticize your plans and priorities. Contrarily, I believe that, in addition to putting forth an alternative position on certain issues, the role of an Opposition M.P. is also to propose solutions to problems. With that in mind, I offer the following;

1. We must ensure that the \$755 million (targeted emergency funding) announced on November 23rd, 2005, is delivered to grains and oilseed producers immediately;
2. The CAIS programme must be repaired and modified without delay. Farmers can not wait for long-term programme review or regulatory Gazetting. Failure to act directly will have dire consequences for the industry and, by extension, for all of rural Canada. While I happen to believe that the current CAIS programme could be made to work effectively, I understand that your government committed to scrapping CAIS. Regardless, I would urge you to consider all options prior to moving forward but I would encourage decisive action in the next 30 days;
3. The government of Canada must continue to be unreservedly steadfast in its protection of supply management. Supply management is a domestic marketing system that has served Canadian agriculture well for 30 years and failure to preserve that system would represent a tremendous step backwards for the sector;
4. I would urge you to move forward with the November 25th, 2005, plan agreed upon as a result of the tripartite industry-federal-provincial roundtable meeting held in Regina, Saskatchewan. Amongst other measures, stakeholders and governments agreed that Canadian agriculture needs policy that leads to growth in profitability, not

just volume. As outlined by the CFA (below) there are already solutions on the table. According to the proposal, the said solutions should be enclosed in a Canadian Farm Bill. I would encourage you to adopt such measures.

The three pillars of CFA's proposed Canadian Farm Bill are:

- The Public Goods and Services Pillar. Under this pillar producers work with society to achieve certain environmental and production objectives. Costs for achieving objectives that address consumer demand or public good and passed on to the beneficiaries – consumers and the general public.
- The Business Risk Management (BRM) Pillar. BRM programs are designed to provide stability when an unforeseen loss has occurred. The new APF II will need to continue to improve these programs to ensure they are responsive, and production insurance will need to be extended to all commodities across the country.
- The Strategic Growth Pillar. To achieve strength and growth in the industry the new APF must ensure that the industry's economic engine is working smoothly. Together, various components must be strategically meshed together to make Canadian agriculture grow. This should include: promotion and support for the development of cooperatives and collective action, reforming the Competition Act, developing profitable export markets, and protection of the three pillars of supply management – Production Discipline, Producer Pricing and Import Controls.

As an aside, I would draw specific attention to the Business Risk Management Pillar. This particular initiative is of the utmost importance and warrants special consideration.

As your Agriculture Minister is well aware of, Canadian farmers will be on the fields in less than 100 days; unless we fail to act. With that in mind, I would call upon you to take immediate action to make the aforementioned a reality. Canadian agriculture has supported this nation from the beginning and today, that industry requires reciprocation. Without question, an investment in agriculture is an investment in Canada and I would urge you to venture accordingly.

I stand ready to render any assistance you require on such matters.

Sincerely,

Paul Steckle, M.P.
Huron-Bruce