

September 25, 2008

To the Leaders:

Canada is a country of urban and rural communities. As the global economy grows more uncertain, we are calling on you to endorse a vision of Canada that includes prosperous farms, sustainable communities and a strongly integrated rural–urban economy.

If cities are the country's economic engines, rural Canada provides the fuel that fires those engines. At a time of economic uncertainty, Canadians want to know that their government is taking action to secure the foundations of our prosperity and quality of life. That means keeping rural Canada strong and connected to urban Canada and the world.

Farms are a key component of the rural economy. They employ 250,000 Canadians and contribute eight per cent of Canada's GDP. Without farms and their products, our country's quality of life — and our day-to-day lives — would be immeasurably poorer.

But without a federal commitment to provide the roads and bridges that farmers need to get their products to urban markets, and without support for the infrastructure Canada's cities and communities need to thrive, the vital flow of trade between urban and rural Canada will weaken, hurting our economy and quality of life.

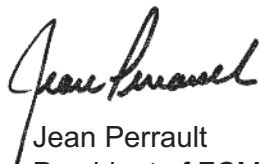
We are asking you to commit to the following four-point plan to strengthen the agricultural sector and build strong, sustainable rural communities:

1. Develop and release a vision for rural and agricultural economic vitality within one year.
2. Dedicate funding for rural communities in all federal infrastructure programs.
3. Revive the National Outlook agricultural conference and establish a timetable for addressing key agricultural issues, including business risk management, public goods and services, strategic growth, and trade.
4. Strengthen the federal Rural Secretariat and appoint a Cabinet champion for rural issues.

Canadians know this isn't a rural–urban issue; it's a national issue with implications for our economy and quality of life. By committing to these principles, you can show Canadians that you understand their most fundamental needs and are ready to invest in keeping Canada strong by supporting our rural foundations.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Jean Perrault
President of FCM
Mayor of Sherbrooke



Laurent Pellerin
First Vice-président
FCA