



PRESS RELEASE

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THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS IS SUCCESSFUL IN ITS BID TO BETTER PROTECT PRODUCERS AGAINST MILK PROTEIN IMPORTS

Ottawa, Thursday, February 8, 2007 – “After months of dithering, it was time to act. The Harper government already had all the tools needed to deal with the issue of milk protein concentrates. It was time to take action before the supply management system collapsed,” said **André Bellavance**, MP for Richmond—Arthabaska and Bloc Québécois Agriculture and Agri-Food Critic, following the government decision to begin negotiations under Article XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to limit the importation of milk protein concentrates.

André Bellavance referred to the third recommendation in the Bloc Québécois motion. The motion, which had the support of the majority of parliamentarians in the House of Commons on June 13, 2006, but was opposed by the Conservatives, read as follows: “That the government invoke Article XXVIII of the GATT where necessary in order to cap imports of milk protein concentrates by immediately launching negotiations with its trade partners and by amending its tariff schedule through a legislative measure adopted by Parliament.”

“I am pleased that the Minister of Agriculture has yielded to our arguments, especially since his government has always refused to use Article XXVIII, on the grounds that using it might compromise Canada’s ability to pursue its trade objectives at the WTO. Action must now be taken to ensure that Article XVIII caps imports of milk proteins not only from European countries and New Zealand, but also from the United States. This is crucial because the Conservative government’s inaction has already cost milk producers millions of dollars that they will never recover,” explained **André Bellavance**.

The Member for Richmond—Arthabaska added that the Bloc Québécois would continue to monitor the situation. “The Conservative government has finally plugged a loophole by implementing the recommendation that milk producers and the Bloc Québécois have been advocating for quite some time. Nonetheless, in light of recent statements made by International Trade Minister David Emerson with regard to supply management, we remain guarded. Agricultural producers subject to supply management, who account for 45% of Quebec’s agricultural economy, can count on the Bloc Québécois to defend their interests, just as we have successfully done for dairy producers with regard to the importation of milk proteins,” said **André Bellavance**.

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