

**Speech by Laurent Souigny, Chair  
Egg Farmers of Canada,  
EFC Annual General Conference  
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Good morning.

Directors, provincial chairs and general managers, staff, friends from across many industries and government—my name is Laurent Souigny and welcome to Egg Farmers of Canada's 37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting.

You've come from every corner of Canada to be among us today.

I'm very pleased you're here, because I have an exciting announcement to share with all of you.

But first, I should say that your presence at this AGM is an affirmation of many things.

To me, it reveals our passion and dedication as egg farmers.

It shows our membership is engaged and working together to overcome the common challenges we face.

Ultimately, it demonstrates our keen interest in the future of this great Canadian industry.

My vision for the future of this industry is something I'd like to share with all of you today.

A wiser man than me once said: we are made wise not by our recollections of the past, but by our responsibility for our future.

Our responsibility for our future.

This notion that the future belongs to each and every one of us is a concept our Board of Directors firmly grasps.

As I look around the Board table, I see a group that is more concerned with making sure we achieve our goals as an industry, and less concerned with how we get there.

It's an important distinction. Tactics are the easy part; they can be planned and managed. It's making sure everyone is on board with a common vision that's the challenge. And our vision is taking shape.

As your Chairman, allow me to share this vision with you.

We will build on the trust and confidence that Canadians have placed in farmers.

I see the farmer becoming even more prominent as the face of the industry. We will be open and approachable. We will speak passionately about why we love what we do.

I see Canadians knowing more about their food than ever before, and wanting to know where their food comes from. And we'll be happy to tell them and show them.

I see farmers continuing to lead the way in on-farm food safety. I see our egg and hen traceability system held up as a model for other countries to emulate.

I see processors and farmers working toward the common good to ensure all stakeholders are getting a fair return for their efforts.

I see supply management strengthened by government support at all levels and by new entrants who are investing in the future with confidence.

I see a renewed Federal Provincial Agreement serving as a strong foundation upon which we continue building supply management in this country.

I see research playing an even more vital role, with a network of experts across the country leading projects that promote further innovation and efficiency in nutrition and production.

I see effective government programs in place to make sure farmers get the help they need when tragedy strikes.

I see a strong, proud and powerful Canadian egg brand recognized and preferred by the consumer—a consumer who knows about our record on animal care, food safety, traceability and the environment.

I also see egg sales at retail, hotels, restaurants, and institutions continuing to hit new peaks—thanks to more great promotions, more strategic partnerships and the fact we'll always be speaking about eggs to the right audiences: whether doctors, the foodservice industry, consumers, retailers, academics and students, or politicians.

One physical law that can't be broken is the fact everyone travels toward the future at 60 minutes an hour. For our industry, though, it seems the future is already here.

Today's public cares more about the environment and animals than ever before.

As farmers, we must act now—and we are—to preserve our social license to operate our businesses without regulations being imposed from the outside, much as we've seen in other jurisdictions.

Above all, we need to ensure our values as farmers are aligning with the communities in which we live. In other words, we need to demonstrate that we share common values. And we do; now we just have to show it.

We do this not only through words, but in the way we use words and in the way these words lead to concrete, identifiable actions that resonate with people.

Our corporate social responsibility to the wider world beyond our farms and office walls is a big responsibility.

Canadians trust the men and women in this room to provide them safe, high-quality eggs every day. But that's not all—they also trust us to protect the environment and ensure our hens are properly cared for.

Ultimately, they trust us to do the right thing, and we're doing our best to live up to these expectations.

Doing the right thing also means giving back to our communities, especially to those in need.

For as far back as I can remember, we've supplied food banks with fresh eggs. And the Board just increased the amount of powdered egg we ship to developing countries—a modest, but much-needed effort to help alleviate hunger on a planet now home to nearly 7 billion people.

As we look to the future, this philosophy of doing the right thing must continue to guide our decisions.

By being good corporate citizens, I think we'll find it a pleasure to reconnect Canadians with the people who grow their food.

Canadians will know we're passionate about what we do. They'll know our animal care program adheres to scientific standards approved by veterinarians, poultry experts, humane societies and government bodies.

They'll also know that Start Clean-Stay Clean™ is one of the best HACCP-based on-farm programs in the world.

It's through these programs that we'll build loyalty to Canadian eggs and egg farmers.

Earlier, I mentioned the environment. But just saying we're good stewards of the environment isn't enough. We need to walk the walk as well.

That's why we'll soon be undertaking a carbon footprint study of the egg industry to measure our impact on the environment. I'm excited about this study because what we learn has a great chance to help farmers become even more efficient.

All this to say: we are working today to position Canadian eggs as the best in the world and Canadian egg farmers as caring, responsible citizens.

On the subject of trust, if consumers trust farmers, if they trust the egg industry, we can lessen the impact of those who attack us.

Canadians simply want us to do what we can to ensure hens are properly cared for. Whether cage housing, free-run or free-range, we provide our hens with fresh feed and water, fresh air, veterinary care as needed, a safe housing environment and check on them each and every day.

We are gathering information about alternative housing, such as aviary, enriched and colony systems, so if farmers in any province choose these in the future, we will have answers to the questions they might have, especially around cost.

We are also working to establish hen and egg traceability standards today so we can launch our national traceability system by 2012. Concept trials were started last year and there will be additional trials this year.

Eggs stamped with a unique producer code will tell us everything we need to know about an egg.

Combined with our other egg industry programs, I have no doubt our new traceability system will play a key role in building loyalty to Canadian eggs and egg farmers.

Canadian egg lovers are increasingly looking for information about how we produce eggs.

And there's no question the young people of today will be tomorrow's egg purchasers.

That's why we need to further our understanding of the way young people are communicating with new electronic media, or social media.

Being able to speak directly with this web-savvy group could be a valuable opportunity, if we can find ways to harness social media's fragmented audience.

Moving on to cost of production. At this very moment, the 2009 Cost of Production survey is well underway. I'm sure some of you in this room have already been asked to participate.

Of course, all submitted data will be anonymous, visible only as national and regional averages to EFC and your provincial board.

Remember that this particular exercise is one of the most important activities we carry out in our industry.

Producer pricing is one of the three essential pillars of supply management, and absolutely critical to ensure egg farmers across the country receive a fair return on average over time.

If you're asked to participate, please take up this challenge.

Another thing we're looking at is collecting cost data related to specialty egg production.

Although we're not doing it in the 2009 survey, increasing specialty egg production means we may have to include a COP for specialty eggs, as it's our responsibility to manage the supply of all eggs, ensuring farmers receive a fair return on their investment.

So we're going to identify what we need to look at in terms of input costs between this COP survey and the next.

Essentially, we're acting today so producers have more information about the real cost to produce a dozen specialty eggs.

I mentioned earlier that our food safety program, recognized by CFIA, is one of the world's best. This doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels.

That's why egg and pullet industry representatives, with input from national and provincial managers, are working to develop a comprehensive reciprocal insurance program for *Salmonella enteritidis*.

This will be a far-reaching program to satisfy the demands of Health Canada and the Organization for Animal Health for increased layer and pullet barn testing.

The current EFC compensation program is only available for layers and is quite restricted—pullets are part of supply chain and they need to be covered, too.

Much progress has been achieved so far, but testing and premium costs remain outstanding issues that must be resolved.

From my vantage point, we have no choice but to succeed, so all involved must find fair and timely solutions to these issues.

Regarding compensation for farmers whose flocks are ordered destroyed under the Health of Animals Act, I am optimistic we'll see a new maximum proposed soon by the government in light of the fact that Agriculture Minister Ritz agrees the current \$8 per bird maximum is not adequate.

Securing adequate compensation has been a lengthy process—but one that I feel will ultimately prove to be worthwhile. It goes to show the importance of relationship building with government officials.

The same thing could be said about the government's support for supply management before world bodies like the World Trade Organization.

On behalf of regulated Canadian egg farmers, I thank the government for its continued support of our industry at the WTO and in Canada-EU trade talks. We witnessed this unshakeable support earlier this month in the Throne Speech.

Looking ahead, Tim and I will continue meeting with our politicians and bureaucrats, and we'll be present during important meetings in Geneva.

Ideally, if we are mindful of our responsibility for our future, I have no doubt supply management will continue to be one of the driving forces that unites egg farmers from coast to coast.

The value of supply management cannot be overstated. It brings economic stability to rural Canada, a fair return over time to farmers, and a stable supply of reasonably priced eggs to consumers.

Not only is this worth fighting for, but it's worth documenting too.

I believe earlier I mentioned that I had a special announcement to make.

As you may know, the year 2012 will mark EFC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Supply management, and the egg industry in particular, has been one of Canada's most successful agricultural commodities for 4 decades.

This success has not been accidental. It's a by-product of visionary leadership, starting with those individuals who launched the system in 1972.

This success is the result of hard-working families who've built this industry over the years, and it's a result of a dedicated team of directors and staff—both provincially and nationally—who've helped develop the high-quality programs, such as Start Clean-Stay Clean™, that keep Canadian egg farmers at the forefront of food quality and safety.

Therefore, it seems to me that the right thing to do is to celebrate this achievement with a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative book that will chronicle our journey so far.

Here with us today is Gordon Hunter, whom most of you will recognize as our former EFC Director from New Brunswick.

Gordon has graciously agreed to co-ordinate this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary project and he'll be working alongside Tim to make it happen.

As you can imagine, this will be a huge undertaking. We'll need the help of our entire industry family to make this project a success.

I'd like to request that each province identify a primary point of contact to assist Gordon in conducting the research, assembling the appropriate documents and photographs, and to identify key individuals in your province that helped create and shape the industry we know and enjoy today.

It will take a great deal of commitment to complete this project by 2012. However, while the workload will be heavy, chronicling our history should be a project we can all enjoy being a part of.

I encourage all of you to become enthusiastic and passionate partners in this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary project.

And now, I'd like to thank our Board of Directors for all the work they've done this past year providing vision and strategic direction to determine the future course of this industry.

To my fellow Executive Committee members, Peter, Serge and Fred, thank you for your leadership and for giving so much of your time. I know this takes you away from your farms and your families, and I appreciate your sacrifice.

To Tim Lambert, our CEO, your steady hand has been essential as we strive to implement the Board's vision and modernize the business.

You should all know that Tim has a great bunch of people working at EFC, and I speak for the Board when I say we have full confidence in this group.

Our staff members understand the issues facing this industry, and I personally want to thank each and every one of you, along with the staff in the provinces, for your excellent work and continued service.

I also recognize my fellow egg farmers for the efforts you're making on your farms every day to ensure your hens are well looked after, and making sure Canadians have access to a safe, stable supply of eggs at reasonable prices.

I appreciate the fact you've been speaking to your elected officials about issues of great concern to our industry, such as trade and compensation, and I know you will continue to do so.

As I've said before: You are the Egg Farmers of Canada, and I'm humbled to serve as your Chairman.

Egg farmers and their partners have a great future in Canada.

We're privileged to operate our farms under supply management, which offers producers and stakeholders alike sustainability and stability.

So as we enter our 38<sup>th</sup> year under supply management, let's continue working together for a bright future for our farmers and our industry. Let's gladly share in all the challenges we see before us.

Thank you.