

**STATEMENT OF CHERYL A LEEMAN
MAYOR FOR THE CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
NORTHEAST DAIRY COMPACT COMMISSION
JULY 9, 2001**

Good Morning

Distinguished members of the Northeast Dairy Compact Commission.

On behalf of Portland, the largest city in Maine, I welcome you to the State of Maine, and in particular, the Portland area.

We thank you for holding your monthly meeting here, and we thank you for allowing us to speak with you about the importance of the Northeast Dairy Compact to Maine's dairy farmers and consumers.

You might be asking yourself why the Mayor of the City of Portland is here today. Portland has no dairy farms, no dairy industry, no large tracks of dairy farm land, and I am not running for another political office. What we do have are almost 64,000 consumers.

Those consumers expect, and rightfully so, that a local supply of pure and wholesome milk be available to meet their daily health needs. They expect quality milk at reasonable prices. I believe the Northeast Dairy Compact has helped stabilize what was an unpredictable market prior to its original authorization in 1996 and deserves serious consideration for reauthorization.

I would also like to note for the record that our communities in the State of Maine are very concerned about sprawl. The continued development of our farmland for other than agricultural use puts us at great risk of losing the rural character of our communities – not to mention, the pressure it puts on our transportation system as people commute greater distances from rural areas to their jobs in urban centers like the City of Portland.

Further, I would like to talk about my personal experience with dairy farming. Some years ago, good friends of mine worked their father's dairy farm in Westbrook until they could purchase their own small dairy farm in St. Albans, Maine.

I saw first hand the many sacrifices they had to make for a life style most of us would not tolerate for long. The cows had to be milked twice a day, 7 days a week; thus, they were tied to that dairy farm and not afforded the mobility most Americans enjoy.

When we went to visit them on weekends, we brought our boots and shovels because if we wanted to socialize, it was done in the barn working along side them.

I am glad my children and I had the experience. We have a real appreciation and first hand knowledge of how that quart of milk started its journey to the shelf in the grocery store.

Most consumers will never truly appreciate the commitment and sacrifices made by our dairy farmers, but they do appreciate seeing the dairy section of the super markets filled with an ample supply of milk at reasonable prices.

In conclusion, the Northeast Dairy Company in my opinion is in the public's best interest because it meets consumer demand for quality milk at reasonable prices, preserves dairy farming and the rural character of our communities – a tradition in our state – while keeping sprawl in check.

Thank you!