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News release

**Bel Group and Fromagerie Bergeron
celebrate 10 years of the exemplary partnership
behind La Vache qui rit® cheese**

Saint-Nicolas, Québec, November 3, 2017 – Numerous dignitaries were in attendance at Fromagerie Bergeron in Saint-Nicolas to mark the 10th anniversary of the partnership between this local business and Bel Group, the world-leading cheese marketer whose famous brand The Laughing Cow® is made here for the Canadian market.

Among the high-profile attendees was Laurent Lessard, MNA for Lotbinière-Frontenac riding and Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who congratulated representatives of the two partner companies and factory personnel.

“The partnership between Fromagerie Bergeron and the Bel Group is a very persuasive example of the importance of innovation in the biofood industry,” Mr. Lessard said. “Here we have a local business that, driven by the desire to develop its expertise and stay attuned to its customer base, has succeeded in forging a sustainable business relationship with a world leader in the cheese industry. I am delighted to be here with you today to celebrate a decade of business relations, a decade of innovation, and a decade of economic development.”

The Laughing Cow® brand is a property of France-based Bel Group. The Laughing Cow® was first imported to Canada from France in 1956, but in 2007, Bel decided to transfer production of the famous cheese for the Canadian market to a local company. Subcontracting operations to Fromagerie Bergeron was something of a gamble, aimed at optimizing the potential of the brand and better meeting the needs of the Canadian market.

“I salute Fromagerie Bergeron for its leadership in forging international agreements that have paved the way for a new era with our European partners,” said Jacques Gourde, federal MP for Lotbinière–Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. “You have proved that it is possible to broaden our intercontinental public procurements.”

Added Marc Picard, MNA for Chutes-de-la-Chaudière: “When a multinational of the calibre of Bel Cheese chooses you as its partner to produce one of its flagship products for all of Canada, you can be justly proud. This is a tremendous acknowledgement of the expertise and skill of the people at Fromagerie Bergeron. As the saying goes, your reputation for excellence preceded you!”

The venture required an investment of several million dollars, split between the two partners. It also created some 50 jobs.

“Fromagerie Bergeron is a jewel in the economic crown of Lévis,” said Gilles Lehouillier, Mayor of Lévis. “Building on its outstanding expertise, it formed a unique partnership with a world-class company, the Bel Group. Fromagerie Bergeron is a job-creator, and contributes directly to our city’s economic strength. It is definitely a most inspiring model of success for the people of Lévis,” he concluded.

The partnership between the two companies has led to an exemplary success story, with production having quadrupled in 10 years, backed by major marketing investments. Today, The Laughing Cow® is sold all over Canada, and eaten in 20% of the country’s households. In Québec, the brand is truly part of people’s daily rituals, with one in three families in La Belle Province putting it on the table and in lunchboxes. To meet that demand, nearly 1.4 billion of the iconic wedge-shaped portions have been produced over the past 10 years, using 100% Canadian cheeses.

A bit of history

In 1865, Jules Bel established a comté cheese ripening and trading business in France’s Jura region. Following his death in 1904, his son Léon Bel carried on the family business. After the First World War, the cheese-making industry began to take off, and Léon foresaw the potential of processed cheese as a tasty, affordable, easy-to-carry and easy-to-keep product. He embarked on a manufacturing venture in 1922, founding the Fromageries Bel corporation.

A visionary, Léon Bel trademarked The Laughing Cow® in 1921. It was an entirely innovative product owing to its original recipe, soft texture, individual portion presentation, triangular format, and packaging. By commissioning famed animal illustrator Benjamin Rabier to draw the famous red cow logo, Léon proved to be an advertising innovator as well, and began building the unique bond between his new brand and consumers.

Today, The Laughing Cow® is an institution, sold in some 130 countries.

Shared values and vision

Catherine Thomas, CEO of Bel Cheese Canada Inc., says the key to the ongoing success of this unique partnership is not only the talent of the cheesemakers at Fromagerie Bergeron, but also the fact that it involves two family-run businesses that, despite their vastly different scales, share similar values of caring, respect and commitment.

“Today we celebrate a wonderful adventure that began in Québec 10 years ago,” she said. “The Laughing Cow® has now become a great Canadian cheese brand thanks in large part to the values we have in common with Bergeron, and the skills of these local cheesemakers. The Bel Group chose Canada to take advantage of a business model that leveraged the recognized expertise of the Québec dairy industry, which they knew would benefit stakeholders in the entire value chain.”

For Fromagerie Bergeron, producing The Laughing Cow®cheese is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to harness know-how passed on from father to son since 1940.

“We are honoured that Bel Cheese has placed its trust in us for 10 years now, and extremely proud to have been chosen as the Canadian producer of The Laughing Cow®, a cheese that is known and loved all over the world,” said the company’s General Manager, Roger Bergeron. “This successful collaboration is a perfect fit with the Fromagerie Bergeron pledge, which is to produce cheeses of superior quality.”

About Bel Group and Bel Cheese Canada

Bel Group is the world’s leading maker of individual-portion cheeses and the number-three branded-cheese producer. Sales by the group in 2016 reached €2.9 billion in 130 countries. It employs 12,000 people and reaches nearly 400 million global consumers. Its five *Marques Cœur*, or core brands, are The Laughing Cow®, Mini Babybel®, Boursin®, Kiri® and Leerdammer®. Subsidiary Bel Cheese Canada was founded in 2005 to spur development of the group’s operations in Canada. For more information, visit www.groupe-bel.com.

About Fromagerie Bergeron

A third-generation family cheesemaking business, Fromagerie Bergeron has been in operation since August 16, 1989. It employs some 180 people in its facilities in Saint-Antoine-de-Tilly and Saint-Nicolas, Québec. Production is continuous, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with more than 26 million litres of milk processed per year.

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