



February 19, 2015

The Honourable Deb Matthews
Deputy Premier/President of the Treasury Board
Treasury Board Secretariat
99 Wellesley St W., Room 4320
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

Dear Deputy Premier:

On behalf of the Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) and our 19,000 producer members, I am writing to you today to express our concerns regarding the negotiations for a renewed collective agreement with the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU) which expired December 31, 2014.

While BFO is hopeful that the government and OPSEU will be able to reach a timely agreement without a labour disruption, the negative impact that will result if the delivery of provincial inspection services is halted is extremely concerning. Ontario's provincial meat inspectors provide inspection services at provincial abattoirs, many of which provide product to free standing meat plants, and are critical to the ongoing operation of these facilities. This is a concern for the Ontario beef industry as provincially inspected abattoirs process approximately 1200-2000 beef animals per week. Without these inspections these facilities cannot operate. This will have devastating economic consequences for these businesses, their employees who will be unable to work, and their families, and will negatively impact Ontario's beef industry.

As the Essential Services Agreement is negotiated by the Treasury Board Secretariat, we urge you to pursue maintaining inspection services for provincially licensed abattoirs. The Essential Services Agreement of 1995 prohibited abattoirs from processing live animals. The subsequent challenge in 2005 to the agreement does not address the realities of today. Current Country of Origin Labelling rules with the United States limit the ability of U.S. packers to buy Canadian livestock leaving few alternative markets for Ontario cattle currently processed at provincially inspected plants. In addition, a labour disruption would eliminate access to Ontario's on-farm emergency slaughter program which is designed to allow for the humane slaughter and processing of animals that have been injured, have escaped confinement, or those that cannot be transported without endangering the animal or persons. This program requires processing be conducted at provincially licensed plants.

As industry responds to the Premier's challenge to grow the agri-food sector, now is not the time to disrupt business at our plants. The investment Ontario has made in strengthening the meat inspection program and promoting the importance of supporting locally sourced products has resulted in the reopening of markets, including major retail chains and public health care institutions. Failure to provide these products to these customers could threaten to displace local meat products with those of other countries or provinces.

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Again, we hope that the two parties can reach a settlement without a labour disruption. However should this not be possible, we request that any Essential Service Agreement provide for inspection services to be maintained at provincial abattoirs. As a secondary alternative, we would ask that 82 OMAFRA appointed veterinarians be utilized as temporary meat inspectors as they are capable of providing anti- and post- mortem inspection and currently do so for emergency slaughter.

Thank you for your attention to this serious and pressing matter that affects not only provincial processing facilities, but their employees, families and many other Ontarians that depend on them for safe, quality, locally produced food.

We would be pleased to meet with you should you or your representative wish to discuss the contents of this letter further.

Sincerely,



Bob Gordanier
President

cc: BFO Board of Directors
Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP)

