



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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February 3, 2015

Hon. Deb Matthews
Deputy Premier/President of the Treasury Board
Treasury Board Secretariat
99 Wellesley Street West, Room 4320
Toronto, ON
M7A 1W3

Via email: dmatthews.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Dear Deputy Premier:

I am writing to express our concerns with the negotiations for a renewal collective agreement with the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU) which expired December 31, 2014.

We are hopeful that the government and OPSEU will be able to reach a timely agreement without a labour disruption, but we are concerned with the continued delivery of inspection services should negotiations break down. Ontario's provincial meat inspectors are critical to provide inspection at slaughter plants. Without ongoing inspections these facilities cannot operate. This will have devastating economic consequences for the plants, their employees and their families.

As the Essential Services Agreement is negotiated by the Treasury Board Secretariat, we are urging you to pursue the maintenance of inspection services at the slaughter plants. The Essential Services Agreement of 1995 prohibited abattoirs from processing live animals. The subsequent challenge to the agreement in 2005 does not address the realities of today. Beyond the direct economic impact, a labour disruption would pose a risk to animal welfare and would severely restrict our diverse Ontario demographic access to inspected product as dictated by their religion.

There are over 15,000 meat animals and nearly 320,000 meat birds processed weekly in provincial abattoirs that require pre and post mortem inspection. The ability to have these animals processed in a federal facility is highly unlikely given many are already working at maximum capacity.

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 previously denied, including major retail chains and health care institutions. Failure to provide products to these customers could set our industry back 20 years.

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 must provide for inspection services to be maintained at provincial abattoirs.

Thank you for your attention to this serious and pressing matter that could significantly impact our rural economy.

Sincerely,



Don McCabe,
President

cc: Hon. Jeff Leal, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Ontario Independent Meat Processors Association