

September 23, 2020

The Hon. Ernie Hardeman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville Street, 11th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Hardeman:

Re: Audits of provincially inspected abattoirs

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation of your government's recognition of the importance of the livestock and poultry sector to the agricultural economy in Ontario. The economic contributions of this sector are vital to the growth and sustainability of the agri-food industry.

OFA recognizes the commitment that you and your ministry have made in establishing the Meat Industry Engagement Panel, announced on October 1, 2019. This panel offers a valuable opportunity to enhance the sector through industry engagement. We appreciated the chance to meet with the panel in February and participate in an engaged discussion on their priorities moving forward.

We are also appreciative of the government's recent investments in the agri-food sector in its commitment of up to \$15 million towards the Ontario Enhanced Agri-Food Workplace Protection Program, as well as the approval of 53 new processing plant projects. These are significant investments to the agriculture and food processing sectors.

OFA would like to acknowledge your ongoing support and engagement of the sector throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We thank you for your continued efforts to ensure we have a safe, strong and reliable food value chain in Ontario.

Recently, several of our members have expressed serious concerns about the meat processing sector due to the impacts of COVID-19. OFA has received multiple resolutions highlighting the vulnerabilities exposed to the sector due to market volatility and reduced access. In OFA's January 2020 pre-budget submission, a request was submitted for financial assistance for food safety upgrades to maintain the high standards for food safety in Ontario. Many small local abattoirs across the province have experienced significant financial strain as a result of complying with government regulations.

OFA supports the Ontario government's efforts to remove unnecessary and burdensome red tape for abattoirs. We want to work together with OMAFRA on reviewing its current provincial meat inspection processes in an effort make changes and implement a more practical approach to the auditing process. As part of this review, we recommend that OMAFRA consult with abattoir

operations to further enhance communication and encourage suggestions on how processes and safety measures could be improved.

Provincially inspected abattoirs are essential to the marketing chain of Ontario's livestock and poultry production. These facilities provide farmers with customer processing services that allow for meat sales to local consumers. Therefore, we request that OMAFRA works with OFA to investigate the vulnerabilities facing small-scale abattoirs to ensure that provincial inspections remain of critical importance.

We thank you for your commitment to working together with the farm community and industry stakeholders to ensure a strong and successful agri-food sector. We look forward to your response on this specific request.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

- cc: Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance
Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines
Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
Mr. Franco Naccarato Executive Director, Meat & Poultry Ontario
Lisa Teeple, President, Rainy River Federation of Agriculture
Bernie Zimmerman, Secretary, Rainy River Federation of Agriculture
Melissa Schneider, President Elgin Federation of Agriculture
Heather Derks, MSR, Elgin Federation of Agriculture
OFA Board of Directors