

Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

Ministère de l'Agriculture,
de l'Alimentation et
des Affaires rurales



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Ms. Ann Slater
Secretary-Treasurer
Perth/Oxford Local National Farmers Union
RR 1
Lakeside, Ontario
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Dear Ms. Slater:

Thank you for your e-mail of February 8, 2010, about the meat regulation, Ontario Regulation 31/05. I appreciate your taking the time to share your concerns about this matter with me.

I understand how important local abattoirs and meat plants are for livestock and poultry producers, and the local economy. Yet we need laws to protect everyone who buys meat and poultry products.

In 2004, the Honourable Justice Roland J. Haines reviewed Ontario's meat inspection and regulatory system. In his report, Justice Haines made a number of significant recommendations. One key recommendation is that abattoirs and freestanding plants have the same food safety standards. We are implementing Justice Haines' recommendations in a responsible manner.

The meat regulation was written specifically with small and medium meat operations in mind. All requirements were designed to be feasible in these types of operations. The regulation is outcome-based and includes flexibility with regard to physical facilities for smaller meat processing operations, while upholding high food safety standards.

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The Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP) has stated,

“The decline in the number of abattoirs over the years (196 in 2003 to 168 in 2008) is related to a number of issues including the decline in livestock production (relates to decreased business for abattoirs), increased overhead costs not reflected in the cost of providing service, loss of revenue from by-products and hides, additional charges to deal with the removal of specified risk material due to federal regulations, no succession plans, shortage of kill floor workers due to a highly labour-intensive job with limited investment in automation, failure to reinvest in their businesses, other regulatory burdens from Ministry of Environment regarding disposal of wastewater, Ministry of Labour, and municipal bylaws.”

The level of compliance with food safety standards identified during annual meat plant audits for the 2009–10 audit cycle to date is 90 per cent. This demonstrates that these requirements are achievable.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to working with meat plants. We educate and advise operators on food safety requirements and feasible options to help them achieve a satisfactory level of compliance with the meat regulation. In addition, the OIMP has services available to assist and train meat plant operators.

Our government has also provided financial assistance. Since 2005, we have committed up to \$25 million in assistance through the Meat Industry Transition Assistance Program.

Again, thank you for writing and sharing your organization’s concerns with me.

Sincerely,



Carol Mitchell
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs