



April 6, 2020

Standing Committee on General Government
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Sent by e-mail to: comm-generalgov@ola.org

Dear Standing Committee on General Government Members,

Re: Bill 156, The Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020

Ontario Pork welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on *Bill 156, The Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020* and to voice our strong support for this important legislation that will serve to protect Ontario's farmers, farm animals and food supply.

Our organization represents the 1,179 pork producers across Ontario by advocating in the areas of policy, research, and industry and market development. Ontario's pork sector represents a significant part of the Canadian economy, combining - from "farm to fork" - \$876 million in GDP and over 13,186 full time jobs.

Ontario's pork farmers are committed to internationally-recognized high standards of biosecurity, animal care and farm practices, based on science, education and animal husbandry best practices. They are proud of how they manage their animals and work hard to produce high-quality food for Canadians.

Protection of animals, farms, families and employees

Farmers need equal protection under the law when their homes, property and workplaces are threatened. Pork producers support peaceful protest on public property as a right enjoyed by all Canadians. Ontario Pork members, like most Canadians, also embrace a system where there are clear consequences for breaking the law and meaningful prosecutions which act as a deterrent to future crimes.

However, the line between legal protests and illegal activities has been crossed by extremist groups and individuals who have grown increasingly brazen in their attacks on the agriculture industry. Activists trespassing on private property, stepping in front of moving transport trucks, stealing animals and harassing workers and families cross the line from peaceful protest to illegal activity.

Farmers wonder how to protect their families, their employees, their animals, property and crops from people who seek to do them harm. Many in agriculture struggle to understand how activists can admit to entering buildings illegally and taking animals, without fear of prosecution, and jeopardize the safety of both transporters and protestors, as well as the safety of animals and the sanctity of farm homes. We firmly believe that Bill 156 respects the right to peaceful protest, while restoring balance between the high standards of animal care inherent to pork farming, and protection for farmers, transporters and others involved in food production.

Biosecurity

Maintaining farm biosecurity is crucial: Anyone entering barns or farms, handling animals or moving between barns without following proper biosecurity protocols puts the health of animals, the safety of food and the livelihood of farmers at risk. Safe farms are important for the people who live and work there, as well as for animals and consumers.

Swine veterinarians have voiced the following concerns about risks posed by activists:

- Pig farmers are responsible for the health and safety of their staff and families, and farming is a dangerous profession. Having untrained, unknowledgeable intruders entering a farm site is a risk for human safety,
- People can infect pigs with influenza virus. Farmers control access to their pigs and require special biosecurity procedures such as vaccination to prevent pigs from getting the flu,
- Pigs become habituated to their human caregivers and to the normal daily routines these caregivers perform. Strangers coming to the barn at a strange time is upsetting for the pigs, and
- When individuals interfere with or feed unknown substances to animals, it presents a risk to animals. If an activist lets pigs out of pens to roam free in barns, and the pig finds and eats rodenticide baits, the pig may die, and the meat, especially liver, is contaminated for a very long time. Essentially the pig is no longer safe for food ever.

Escalated and extreme activism

When targeted by activists, Ontario farmers and livestock transporters need to know they can count on our legal system to uphold the rule of law. In recent months, Ontario's agriculture industry has seen an escalating pattern of animal rights activists invading private property and vehicles. These incidents include:

- Entering farm buildings without consent, recording video and filing nuisance complaints with various regulatory bodies,
- Removing animals from farm properties,
- Walking onto farms in large groups and refusing to leave when asked,
- Stepping in front of moving livestock transport vehicles and refusing to move putting their lives at risk, in addition to the driver and livestock being transported,
- Abusing (verbally and physically) and harassing livestock transporters by opening cab doors, throwing objects at cab windows and placing arms and objects inside the trailer, and
- Entering processing facilities, interfering with business operations and refusing to leave.

Ontario's pork farmers – committed to a safe, healthy and thriving industry

Ontario's pork farmers and their partners remain committed to high standards of animal care and transparency. They work closely with veterinarians, feed specialists and regulators to raise healthy animals in a sustainable and responsible way.

Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 strengthened animal care standards for all animals, with sections specific to livestock agriculture and provided a legal, safe and bio-secure mechanism for public to raise animal care issues. For Ontario pork farmers, *Bill 136* and the proposed *Bill 156* will ensure that the highest standards of animal care are followed, while keeping people, animals and food safe from trespassing, harassment and illegal interference.

Ontario's pork sector has a long and proud history of producing food that Ontarians and people around the world depend on for quality, affordability and taste.

Ontario Pork's four-year journey of reporting on social responsibility efforts underpins its commitment to transparency and sharing its story with both consumers and government. With a focus on clear and measurable goals for improvement in the key areas of: successful farming operations, healthy animals and safe food, a sustainable environment and strong communities and people, the industry continues with its goal of integrity, trust and honesty and accountability in all we do.

We welcome government leadership and support to maintain a business environment that allows Ontario to keep providing the province and the world with high quality pork.

Ontario Pork appreciates the opportunity to provide input on *Bill 156, The Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020* and commends the government for their support of this important legislation and the protection of the pork sector, as well as the entire agri-food industry.

Sincerely,



Eric Schwindt
Board Chair