



September 25, 2020

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Council
City of Burlington
426 Brant Street, PO Box 5013
Burlington, Ontario
L7R 3Z6

To the Hon. Mayor and Council members;

Ontario Pork represents 1,200 hog farmers in the province, including those who ship pigs into the Sofina Foods plant in the City of Burlington. In addition to providing high quality food, our members create jobs, drive innovation and contribute to economic growth.

When livestock truck drivers and animals are harassed, stressed or injured and food safety is compromised, the livelihood of our members and their economic contribution is at stake.

Animal rights extremism in Burlington

The City of Burlington, its citizens and businesses are the target of an escalating campaign of harassment, vandalism, threats and aggression by a small group of animal rights extremists.

In other jurisdictions, these types of protests happen occasionally. That was once the case in Burlington, as well. Unfortunately, in recent years, these protests have steadily escalated both in frequency and in terms of the aggressive behaviour by participants.

Operating with few, if any legal repercussions for their actions, these animal rights extremists put themselves, their children and others in danger by interfering with large livestock transports and the animals they contain. Waivers posted to activist social media sites in the past clearly detail the risk of harm or death to protest participants and their children, and attempt to absolve organizers of any liability.

The death of a protestor in June of this year was a tragic and terrible reminder of just how dangerous this behaviour can be.

Ontario Pork, along with our colleagues at Sofina Foods and the Ontario Livestock Transporters Alliance, have met with police on multiple occasions, asking for better enforcement and protection for drivers and animals.

Today, we are asking for your support to increase safety by taking action to prevent protestors from interfering with trucks and livestock.



About Bill 156

In the fall of 2019, the Government of Ontario recognized the threat posed by animal rights extremists with the introduction of Bill 156, *the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act*. It was no coincidence that this followed the introduction of Bill 136, *the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act (PAWS)*, which includes the toughest penalties in Canada for animal abuse, with fines of up to \$260,000 and two years in jail. The PAWS Act has specific sections for farm animals, and includes dedicated enforcement and clear processes for reporting and inspection.

Bill 156 was designed to better protect farmers, truckers, processing plant workers and others across the food chain. It was a response to police and courts who said they needed better tools to address a surge in break-ins, thefts, property invasions, threats and vandalism by animal rights extremists seeking to end animal agriculture. Farm families, truckers and plant workers are rightfully afraid for the well-being of their families and employees, and for the safety of the food they produce.

Bill 156 received Royal Assent on June 18, 2020 but will not come fully into force until the supporting regulations are complete.

On September 2, the Government of Ontario attempted to address escalating protests by animal rights extremists – largely centred in Burlington – by immediately enacting Section 6(1) and supporting regulations.

Section 6 (1) reads:

No person shall stop, hinder, obstruct or otherwise interfere with a motor vehicle transporting farm animals.

New safety concerns with proclamation of Section 6 (1)

It was our hope that the early introduction of this section would reduce the risk of harm to people and animals. Like any law, success is dependent on effective enforcement by police and the courts.

Instead of blocking trucks from accessing the Sofina plant, animal rights extremists now jostle for position on the narrow median on Appleby Line, as trucks wait to turn left onto Harvester Road. They continue to stick arms, electronic devices, nozzles, hoses and other items into the trailers, causing additional stress and possible harm to the animals inside. The risks of a person tripping, becoming entangled, or falling from the median unseen by a driver are of serious concern.



Despite these safety concerns and the intent of Government in declaring Section 6(1), Halton Police have indicated that they will not prevent protestors from interfering with trucks from this median until Section 6 (2) of Bill 156 comes into force.

Section 6 (2) reads:

No person shall interfere or interact with a farm animal being transported by a motor vehicle without the prior consent of the driver of the motor vehicle.

Measures to increase safety

At this point, it appears that Bill 156 will not be fully in force until the end of the year, or early in 2021. To address the immediate concerns to human, animal and food safety, we ask the following of the City of Burlington Council:

- 1) Support the motion put forward today calling for Section 6(2) of Bill 156 to be proclaimed immediately
- 2) Through your regional representatives, deliver clear expectations that Halton Regional Police Service enforce existing legislation to ensure public safety by preventing protestors from interfering with trucks and animals
- 3) Advocate for increased safety measures at the corner of Appleby Line and Harvester Road, by removing or reducing access to the median.

As Canadians, we respect our shared rights to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly in public spaces. But continuing to allow animal rights extremists to touch trucks and interfere with animals entering the food chain is simply unsafe for everyone involved.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Eric Schwindt, Board Chair