



Mayor Mead Ward  
Burlington City Council

September 28, 2020

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

On behalf of Sofina Foods Inc., I am writing to express our support for Councilor Sharman's Motion related to the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

Sofina Foods Inc. is one of Canada's largest pork and poultry processors, with 11 plants in Ontario.

### **About our plant in Burlington**

Our plant has been in Burlington since the 1960s. We are one of the top employers in Burlington and our close to 1,000 employees as well as the many Ontarian family farms that supply to us have come to rely on the convenience of our location. We plan to remain here and to continue to expand our business over time.

### **Supporting Councilor Sharman's motion**

Sofina Foods Inc. and its partners in the supply chain are involved in raising, transporting and processing food animals in Ontario. We remain increasingly concerned regarding the escalation in aggressive behaviours by members of animal activist groups in front of our plant in Burlington, ON.

Some of the tactics activists employ to impose their "Bear witness" mission are causing a great deal of concern to Sofina Foods Inc. and our partners and represent a risk to public safety. Before section 6.1 of Bill 156 was passed, these tactics included interfering with transport, stepping on the road in the middle of traffic, harassing our employees and vendors and putting hands and arms inside the trucks filled with animals, sometimes while these trucks were moving. Often times, this also led to activists trespassing on our property. Tragically, an activist lost her life a few months ago during such protest.

Sofina Foods has invested significant resources to ensure the safety of its employees, the transport companies and the public, and has worked with the regional police to help

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address dangerous or illegal actions. Bill 156 provides the police agencies with the tools to ensure the safety of the public and reasonable access to freedom of expression.

### **A public safety issue**

We remain very concerned with the ongoing public safety issues we continue to observe during protests.

A key area of concern is the median at the intersection of Appleby and Harvester where many protestors are now standing, reaching into the trucks and putting themselves at significant risk of injury.

- Section 6.1 of Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act came into effect on September 2, 2020. This portion of the Bill essentially prohibits the stopping, hindering, obstructing or otherwise interfering with a motor vehicle transporting farm animals.
- This legislation is the first meaningful tool we have seen toward addressing the harassment and blocking of livestock transport to the Sofina plant.
- Following September 2, 2020, some of the protestors moved to the median on Appleby Line so they could still touch, film and give water to the pigs inside the trailer when trucks are stopped at a red light. This creates an unsafe situation as they could be injured by the truck or the animals in addition to entering the vehicle's blind spots. The driver cannot always see if all protestors are clear when they start driving again. Protestors could easily slip off the median, especially in wet or icy weather, and be struck by the moving trailer.
- Another tactic we observed is to slow down the ingress of trucks into our property by walking very slowly across the crosswalk, causing trucks to stop for the duration of the green light, and therefore creating traffic issues.

The three organizations supporting the motion are directly impacted by protests at the Sofina plant. Sofina, as the target location; OLTA as the representative of 80% of livestock trucks delivering to the plant; Ontario Pork as the organization representing the owners of the hogs shipped to the plant.

### **Our ask**

Our main concern is to ensure public safety. **Specifically, we believe that steps need to be taken to stop these new unsafe protest practices before someone else is hurt.**

As a significant contributor to the Burlington community, creating jobs, attracting new residents and contributing to the tax base, Sofina Foods welcomes the support of the city and regional governments to ensure strong enforcement of the recently enacted

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sections of Bill 156, and to expedite the full implementation and enforcement of the legislation.

Sofina Foods looks forward continue building a collaborative relationship with your office and the Ontario government over the coming months as we continue to build our operations.

Best regards,

*Kerry Towle*

Kerry Towle  
Vice President, Industry and Government Relations  
Sofina Foods Inc.  
780-405-9972