



29 June 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

I hope you and your family are well.

I am writing concerning measures to contain COVID-19 in food production establishments should there be a second wave of infection in Canada as is happening in other parts of the world.

As you know, food production establishments and farms have been and continue to be hot spots for the virus, especially in meat production facilities where physical distancing is in many cases impossible. In fact, conditions in these plants are perfect environments for the virus to grow and persistently lurk. They are cool and humidity levels are high. In addition, these workplaces are extremely noisy, so workers need to speak loudly and they must get close to each other to be heard, which makes it nearly impossible to adhere to the 2m social distancing principles.

I believe that proper hazard assessments as required by the Canada Labour Code will determine that the protections provided leave employees vulnerable to this biological hazard, COVID-19, but these assessments have not been done.

Your government has announced a \$77 million fund to support worker safety improvements in meat packing plants. No criteria for how this fund will be distributed have been announced and it seems unlikely that any of this money will actually be available until the end of September. In our opinion, Canadians will get the biggest bang for their investment of this money if companies are eligible to receive support only if they collaborate with the unions representing workers at their plants. This will ensure the money is wisely spent to achieve the safety objectives of the program.

Around the world we are seeing the second wave of the virus hit countries that have relaxed their COVID lockdowns. I sincerely hope Canada is spared such a fate. But hoping is not good enough. We need to plan how to avoid a repeat of our food production facilities becoming virus hot spots. We recommend:

- Rather than allowing some plants to remain open while others shutdown, establish a national approach when outbreaks occur in food processing establishments that protects worker and community safety.
- Implement the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations in all facilities to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- As a condition to receive any support from the Emergency Processing Fund require companies to work co-operatively with the unions representing workers
- Keep production line speeds slower than normal to permit physical distancing
- Stop multi-plant assignments for inspectors
- Make routine testing for the virus available to inspectors and plant workers
- Last but not least, the dedication and bravery of CFIA inspectors who risk their health and well-being every day they go to work must be recognized by ensuring they have adequate personal protective equipment, including latex gloves, N95 masks, face shields, and access to a steady supply of hand sanitizer.

I would be pleased to speak with your office about these needed measures. Please feel free to reach out to my personal cell 613-715-3767.

Yours sincerely,



Fabian Murphy

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