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14 April 2020

The Honourable Patricia Hajdu, P.C. M.P.
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

I am writing further to the Prime Minister's announcement of a \$20 million increase to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for more food inspection during the pandemic.

While this announcement is welcome, it is an occasion to raise with you our concerns about the protection of inspectors who are working in meat production plants that are increasingly hot zones for the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Several plants have been shut down following multiple positive tests for the novel corona virus among plant workers. In spite of the risk associated with working in these plants and the strategic importance of these facilities to our food security, not enough has been done to ensure these facilities protect the workers whose job it is to produce safe food safely.

Only recently have some but not all CFIA inspectors and plant staff been fitted with some personal protective equipment. None are tested routinely. And, many production staff working at these plants are not protected or tested either.

These people cannot work from home. Production line speeds continue to be high to meet demand, even though many facilities are cramped to the point where people are working shoulder to shoulder. Social distancing to stay safe from the new corona virus is often not possible. Yet these workers show up every day to help keep food on our dinner tables.

In spite of this incredible commitment, authorities have been slow to act in the face of the new hazards these people face every day. At the moment, many meat plants are still scrambling to change their processes while many inspectors and production staff continue to work without appropriate personal protective equipment. **And none of these frontline workers are being routinely tested for the virus even though two major plants have been closed, including one in Quebec where 100 staff are now known to be infected.**

I urge you to address this situation by requiring CFIA inspection and veterinarian staff, and production workers be outfitted with the appropriate personal protective gear and that they be tested for the virus at the highest priority as critical workers providing an essential service.

In the absence of immediate steps to address this situation, these production facilities could become vectors for the spread of the virus and the safe production of meat in Canada could grind to a halt.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance. I can be reached on my personal cell phone 613-715-3767. In any case, please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Fabian Murphy

National President

Président national

Agriculture Union, PSAC

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Copies to:

Prime Minister Trudeau

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Dr. Siddika Mithani, President of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency