

January 28, 2004

The Honourable Mr. Justice Roland J. Haines
Superior Court of Justice
80 Dundas Street
12th Floor, Unit "K"
London, Ontario
N6A 6B2

Dear Mr. Justice Haines:

On behalf of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, I wish to confirm the Union's intention to participate in your review of Ontario's meat regulation and inspection system.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union represents 100,000 members in the public and broader public sectors, including 50,000 provincial government employees. The Union has a long history of advocacy on behalf of public services and public servants. We made a significant contribution to the Walkerton Inquiry and we are actively involved in the SARS Inquiry.

The Union represents the front line staff at the Ministries of Agriculture and Food and Natural Resources, and also supports contract meat inspectors. Until 1996, the Union represented 150 full time permanent meat inspectors, who were then almost all laid off, and largely replaced with inspectors on contract. The Union has recently negotiated a grievance settlement which will result in most of those positions returning to the public service in the next few months. As I mentioned, further details are available on the Union's website.

In the context of your review, the Union intends to bring forward the expertise and insights of meat inspectors and to make submissions about the needed improvements to the meat inspection system. We expect to address the following topics, amongst others:

- clarification of enforcement powers,
- fostering an appropriate regulatory culture within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food,
- adequacy of staffing and funding,
- the importance of staff stability and accumulated expertise, and
- training about risks to consumers.

We do wish to comment on the process of your review. We suggest that your review provide opportunity for participation through at least the following means:

- individual meetings, to be conducted in confidence if appropriate,
- written submissions,
- public meetings or hearings.

It is certainly our intention to participate through all available forums. In our submission, it is important for the review to be as “transparent” as time permits.

An issue to address immediately is clear protection of employees and contractors from reprisals. The only assurance provided to date is the enclosed correspondence from the Ministries. This falls short of the kind of protection that is needed, and we look forward to discussing additional measures.

We would also appreciate receiving a copy of your mandate as provided by the Attorney General.

The Union looks forward to discussing all these issues with you at your earliest convenience, and I hope to hear from you or counsel to the review about arranging a meeting for that purpose.

Sincerely,

Timothy G.M. Hadwen
General Counsel

TH/ld

Encl.

c. Peter Kryworuk