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▶ Pat Finnigan, MP, Chair
Lianne Rood, MP, Vice-Chair
Yves Perron, MP, Vice-Chair
Aimée Belmore, Clerk
Standing Committee on Agriculture and
Agri-Food
131 Queen Street, 6th Floor
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Subject: Committee study on Processing
Capacity

Dear Mr. Finnigan et al:

Subject: Committee Study on Processing Capacity

We are writing to you today to let you know where we stand as a producer and processor of products on our farm. We hope to be able to provide you with some insight so you can come up with recommendations to address the problems and pitfalls that small producers face every day.

Au Gîte des Oies is located in the Township of Roxton in the Acton Regional County Municipality. We have been raising farm ducks and geese for over five years and are now in our sixth season. We raise 500 geese and up to 1,200 ducks per year. Although that may seem high, we are just a small player in the production of Anatidae.

To provide you with a bit of background to explain our situation, until last year there were two goose abattoirs in Quebec: a federal one in St Louis de Gonzague (Hudson Valley), and a provincial one on Île d'Orléans. Given the limited number of abattoirs, you can see why we have to plan our breeding and slaughter six months in advance and book four appointments to slaughter 100 geese.

But now we have only one abattoir in Quebec, because on Thursday, November 5, 2020, we were banned from the federal abattoir and had our other slaughter appointments cancelled because the CFIA inspector claimed that we had female geese in our batch and that it posed risks of allergenic contamination (eggs)! I must point out that we had 400 geese slaughtered the previous year without any problems.

So in November, we ended up without an abattoir to take our 400 geese! After many dealings with our MPs, the Quebec Duck and Geese Breeders Association (AECOQ) and several industry players, we managed at the very last minute to have our geese slaughtered. In response to our general appeal for help, the producer Canard Goulu was kind enough to slaughter 100 geese; Hudson Valley, following talks with the CFIA, was able to slaughter 100; and to help us out, Ferme d'Orléans asked its customers to reschedule their appointments so we could slaughter the remaining 200.

It was one minute to midnight for us—it was a dire situation and we seriously considered giving up everything. Not only are we producers, but we are also processors of local products and without geese we could do nothing.

We did not have the money or the space to keep our geese. They ate an average of 1.5 tonnes of feed and 250 kg of corn per week and we had to add a pallet of shavings. This was a loss for us, because our geese were ready for slaughter and processing.

The CFIA, which seems to be the police, judge, jury and executioner, allows geese and ducks to come in from Hungary because there are supposedly not enough Canadian geese and ducks to meet demand! The CFIA should be a little more consistent and accommodating toward Canadian goose and duck producers.

So there is only one abattoir left in Quebec and it is not federally regulated, which means that we are shut out of the Canada-wide and international market. What would happen if this abattoir were to close? That would mean the end of goose production in Quebec and take us one step closer to dependency on international food producers.

The solution is quite simple: open several abattoirs in various regions to allow slaughter consistent with animal welfare rules and a new vision of consistency for the CFIA regarding abattoirs and imports of non-compliant Anatidae.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Lazure and Louis Paul Quérel

Owners

Au Gîte des Oies

23/02/2021