

Bill C-205 is an obvious attempt by agricultural lobbyists (for example, the lobbyists for the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and those for chicken, egg, and meat farmers)

to take advantage of the COVID -19 crisis for the benefit of “big farma.” The bill before Parliament is inaptly named: it is not intended to promote the health of animals, rather, it is designed to prevent the public from learning about egregious acts of animal cruelty on animal factory farms.

The federal government already has several laws that deal effectively with contamination of our food sources (eg: the existing Health of Animals Act, Food Inspection Agency) and with harassment and unlawful entry (Criminal Code). The present bill wants to stop the exposure of animal cruelties by preventing their exposure. The draconian penalties of \$250,000 or two years in prison for individuals, and fines of \$500,000 for organizations (such as newspapers or animal advocacy associations) that enter a space inhabited by animals that “could result” in exposure to a toxic substance that is “capable” of affecting the animals indicate the real purpose of this bill.

Also indicative of the bill’s purpose is the emphasis on farmers’ mental health. Of course, this discussion is designed to take advantage of the current discussions of mental health during the pandemic. If the bill’s sponsors were truly concerned with animal welfare then they might discuss the fact that Ottawa has the worst animal transport laws in the western world and only regulates how animals are transported and slaughtered.

If concerned citizens face the possibility of two years in prison for exposing animal cruelty, who then speaks for the animals? Not the perpetrators, not the farm lobbyists, not the toothless federal laws! Not the provinces of Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and Manitoba. If the government wants to protect farm animals and biosecurity, it should empower and protect whistleblowers and it should increase transparency (rather than reduce it) and enforce anti-cruelty laws. If we believed that the government was doing its job in protecting its citizens and its animals there would be no reason to trespass on factory farms.