

Brief - Opposition to Bill C 205 proposed amendments to The Health of Animals Act

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I am disappointed and strongly oppose private member's Bill C 205 which amends The Health of Animals Act. I am against any legislation that would:

- impede the ability of people who are working to expose cruelty to animals,
- prevent anyone from exercising their right to freedom of speech,
- or prevent anyone from providing assistance to animals in distress.

The animal agriculture industry has a lot to hide, and it is certainly not this or any government's role to help hide it. There are already trespassing laws in place so this serves no purpose other than to target whistleblowers who are exposing horrific cruelty that takes place particularly on factory farms or during transport.

We have some of the worst animal protection laws in modern civilization and are becoming increasingly disrespected for it from people all over the world. Instead of targeting advocates, we should be putting better animal protection laws in place that Canadians can be proud of.

According to the CFIA almost 2 million animals arrive dead or are dying by the time they reach the slaughterhouse every year, some having been transported up to 24 hours without food and water in their own filth in extreme heat or cold. So a person entering a premises, taking a photograph, exposing the horrific conditions of these animals for journalists, or for the benefit of the general public, is not the problem.

If you truly want to deal with bio security issues on factory farms, then I would like to recommend we start monitoring and regulating the use and overuse of antibiotics in the farming industry, the use of shared needles, or the horrific and stressful conditions animals live in on factory farms such as overcrowding, gestation crates, untreated injuries, mutilation without pain meds that are all common practice in the industry. Let's deal with the horrific conditions animals are subjected to during transport.

Forcing any living being to exist within the confines of a gestation crate being pumped full of antibiotics that are causing antibiotic resistant genes in our waterways, is both inhumane for the animal and dangerous for human health.

We need better animal protection laws, not legislation that endorses the very cause of pandemics and punishes people for speaking up against it.

The elephant in the room and what is well documented and Scientists have repeatedly said, if we truly want to reduce the chances of pandemics then we need to transform our food systems to plant based diets, as is reflected in our Canada Food Guide, which was developed by scientists, without influence from the industry groups who were profiting from the sale of meat and dairy.

So I'm asking you all to make decisions based on science and represent the interests of all Canadians not an industry we should be ashamed of. Our tax dollars should not be given to prop up the animal agriculture industry as it represents cruelty, is no longer needed, consuming animal protein is not good for our health and animal agriculture is destroying our environment.

If this Bill was truly a conversation about bio security and we truly want to reduce our risk of the spread of disease, a good start would be by improving the living conditions of the animals you eat and helping our farmers transition to plant based farming or create more sustainable and humane systems where animals don't suffer and human health isn't at risk. In the interests of all Canadians, we need to move away from factory farming now.

But it appears the motivation of this bill has nothing to do with preventing a pandemic or protection of animals.

So let's talk about the real issue.

Animal activists have played an important role in exposing horrendous animal cruelty to the public and more people are starting to pay attention. We appreciate what they do because we all know when you speak up for animal welfare, you become a target, and that's exactly what this Bill is about - the industry wants them stopped.

These brave people are simply trying to make the world a better, a kinder place with more compassion, and some of what I have learned from them, I would like to share with you:

- There are no laws in place protecting animals on Canadian farms today, it is a self regulated industry;
- We send pigs, who are known for their intelligence, to a gas chamber to die; I have personally watched footage inside a gas chamber of a Hog plant, (slaughter house) and I can tell you while these baby pigs are burning from the inside out, they are screaming for mercy, it is far from humane. So please remember that the next time you have one on your plate;
- The process to obtain semen from a bull is to stick an electric prod up the anus and electrocute him until he ejaculates; my understanding is there is an industry expectation you must give them 15 minutes to get back up off their knees and recover before you do it a second time;
- Some have said that the only thing a dairy factory farmer and an activist will agree on is the name of the equipment that a female cow is strapped to in order to be forcibly impregnated/sexually assaulted is called a "rape rack."
- Castration without pain meds and blunt force euthanasia or thumping is common practice in breeding facilities particularly in hog farms. Baby pigs are killed by smacking their head while the mom watches from her gestation crate;
- It is common practice in the egg industry for live male chicks to be placed on a conveyor belt which leads to what is comparable to a meat grinder because they don't lay eggs; I think by now you may have seen or heard of what took place at Brady Landfill outside Winnipeg recently and must admit, it is an industry none of us should be proud of. It is an industry that requires more transparency, and less cover up;
- It is clear to me, what is going on in these factories, is not farming; it is an insult to a true farmer.

So as the public becomes more aware of the inhumanity in this industry and the damage it is doing to our environment, our health, and we recognize that animals were not put on this earth to be treated in this way, more people are speaking up. If the industries involved did not have something to hide, they would not have asked this legislation be put in place. An animal activist does not enter a property unless there is a reason. These facilities require more transparency, not less.

So by endorsing plans to continue to expand these industries such as the pig slaughtering business, exporting more live animals exposing them to increased risk of disease, you in fact are increasing the risk of spreading disease to us all. All while continuing to tell us this is to feed the planet, while we are also listening to the World Health Organization who has listed pig flesh commonly referred to as bacon a #1 carcinogen and red meat a #2 carcinogen and we know we could actually end world hunger by going plant based.

In closing, I ask you, what message are we sending to today's youth when mental health issues appear to be at an all time high and harsher laws are being proposed that make it a crime to expose cruelty and show compassion to another living being? Are these the people we want to fill up our jails? We need to start learning from our past mistakes and start demonstrating more humanity. What takes place in these breeding facilities is far from humane and will no doubt form part of our history. Which side of history do you want to be on?

Thank you