

To all Canadian Citizens:

June 22, 2009

Is it important for you to be able to go to a grocery store and purchase safe, high quality Canadian food? That simple convenience may soon be at risk.

Agriculture is less than 2% of the population. Farmers are quietly providing your food, whether it be wheat for your bread, meat for your BBQ, veggies cause they are veggies or fruit for your dessert or wine. All we require is a fair price for our product at the end so we can continue to provide food for Canadians and the world. That ability is now being threatened for the pork industry.

The Canadian Pork industry is going into its third year of losses. Hog farmers have worked through government programs, improved productivity to be able to compete on the world markets, quietly re-mortgaged equity to pay for the shortfalls, laid off employees and then H1N1---infamously called Swine Flu---hit. Our prices dropped 20% in a two week period. It has been estimated the Ontario industry alone lost \$8.4 million in one month. This comes at a time when summer markets had shown potential to be the turning point. The point where all of us who had re-mortgaged and re-structured saw some ray of hope.

Our industry has been losing \$30.00 to \$80.00 per hog over these three years—on potentially an animal averaging \$150.00 in total. We are based on the US dollar. With every percentage the Canadian dollar increases our price is negatively affected. We are a free trading country and ironically, US pork is being imported to our grocery stores because they can supply at a discounted rate. Latest estimates are a ¼ of a million tonnes of pork are imported per year. This is the same country that has enacted the Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling. This piece of US legislation has negatively affected our ability to export live animals to the US. Our industry's equity has taken the hit over the past 3 years.

If the Canadian pork industry is decimated, will there be a shortage of pork in grocery stores? Not likely. Some country will continue to supply consumers with the product irrelevant of food and safety protocols or the loss to the Canadian economy. What everyone fails to recognize is that it isn't just pork farmers that lose in this situation. It is lending institutions, farm equipment operators, feed companies, smaller retailers, veterinarians, genetics companies and the list goes on. Did you know 70,000 jobs in Canada are a direct result of hog production? \$3.2 billion in farm cash receipts. \$2.7 billion in pork export sales, 42,000 jobs, \$7.7 billion in economic activity and \$2.1 billion in wages and salaries are directly attributed to export.

What do we want and need? Governments at all levels to recognize there is a crisis and action is required immediately. We want agriculture to be mentioned in the Government's budget near the beginning—not as an after thought. Educate Canadians on what it means to have agriculture in Canada. Truth in labeling our products so you can make an educated choice when feeding your family and friends. Have government-owned institutions serve Canadian-grown products. Have programs in place to help our food banks serve balanced diets which include all sources of protein. Have farmers make a living without Government Support. Take a moment to think of what all agriculture does to enhance your life as a Canadian—hopefully at least 3 times a day.

At a meeting I attended of pork producers one comment was made on how eerily quiet we are. One producer likened us to the animal that doesn't have a water source. It gets weaker and weaker and unable to get up. As farmers we believe and love producing food for you and your families. We know the importance of doing a good job to ensure you get a safe, quality product on your plate. We are losing producers as we speak. We are just asking for someone to bring us "water" so we can gather our strength to stand up and be there for you.

Respectfully submitted, Teresa Van Raay, Pork Producer, South Western Ontario

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