

October 18, 2012

**The Hon. Alison Redford  
Premier of Alberta**

307 Legislature Building  
10800 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Redford:

On behalf of the Alberta Federation of Labour, and the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401, we are writing to request a meeting to discuss an independent public inquiry into the events that led to E.coli contamination in one of the country's largest meat packing and processing facilities.

The meat packing industry has been dominated by large, multinational players for some time; the entrance of Brazilian-owned JBS USA solidifies that trend. Given their market dominance, these companies are often considered "too big to fail." The cattle industry employs more than 20,000 people and accounts for more than \$ 11.6 billion of the provincial economy. We have a responsibility to our farmers and ranchers, our consumers, and the billions in agricultural spinoff activity in Alberta to get this right.

But the federal government is clearly not getting it right.

Due to federal inaction, nothing has changed at the Brooks plant or other meat processing facilities in Canada. The 2009 listeriosis outbreak – causing the death of 23 Canadians – resulted in a government report. So far, the Weatherill recommendations have not been enacted by the Harper government.

The federal government has announced virtually no changes to regulations at the Brooks facility. They are, in fact, slated to cut the CFIA budget by a further \$53 million. They are examining pursuing an even more lax regulatory approach, and are surveying CFIA employees as we speak about new "risk-based" regulations and inspections.

If left to the federal government, an outbreak such as this one will most certainly happen again, and the consequences could be far more deadly than this latest crisis.

If the federal government will not act, Alberta must.

An independent public inquiry should investigate the level of authority, autonomy and mandate of Canadian Food Inspection Agency employees. There should be examination of the need to regulate line speed, update reporting policies and implement effective food safety precautions.

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Only a public inquiry can ask the right questions: Are meat processing facilities being allowed to police themselves? Are federal cuts and changes to CFIA mandates leading to food safety crises? Is there adequate training and whistle-blower protection for workers?

The results of Canada's system of self-regulation have already been criticized by American inspectors. Over the last decade, several USDA inspections have flagged problems with beef processing plants in Alberta.

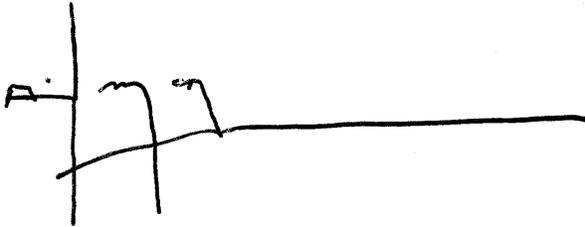
It is time for Alberta to stand up for one of our most important industries.

The independence and thoroughness of such an inquiry would be valuable in restoring public confidence in the safety and cleanliness of Canadian beef, both at home and abroad.

It is too important to these workers, and to the economy of the province to allow another crisis like this one to undermine the 'Alberta brand.' It is the responsibility of the Government of Alberta to protect an industry that is crucial to tens-of-thousands of workers all over the province.

Workers, government and business leaders share an ethical responsibility to ensure the safety of Canadian consumers. We are pleased to work with you to ensure that a situation like this one does not reoccur.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gil McGowan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Gil McGowan, President  
Alberta Federation of Labour**

And

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug O'Halloran', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

**Douglas O'Halloran, President  
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401**