

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON HEALTH**



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

**COMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA SANTÉ**

24 November 2016

Mr. Paul Glover
President
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road Tower 1, Floor 6, Room 100
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0Y9

Dear Mr. Glover,

I am writing to you on behalf of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health (“the Committee”) to request further clarification regarding the testimony of Mr. Paul Mayers, Vice President, Policy and Programs Branch, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), who appeared before the Committee on 8 June 2016 to discuss the *Supplementary Estimates (A), 2016-17*.

During the course of his testimony, Mr. Mayers articulated that CFIA inspectors are present every day and during every shift in federally registered meat slaughter plants. For federally registered meat processing plants, Mr. Mayers further clarified that, “CFIA inspectors visit those plants every day, every shift, but they are not present 100% of the time. It is an inspection done every single shift.”

On 13 June 2016, I received a letter from Mr. Bob Kingston, President of the Agricultural Union. In his letter, Mr. Kingston indicated that the statement made by Mr. Mayers before the Committee on 8 June 2016 was incorrect. Mr. Kingston explained that CFIA’s 2014/15 Work Plan for the Northern Alberta region had instead called for: “Reduced daily presence in registered processing establishments that are not eligible to export to the USA. Plants eligible to export to the USA will continue to be inspected under daily presence.” The letter explained that this reduction in the daily presence of inspectors is a result of staff shortages.

In his letter, Mr. Kingston also expressed concerns that staff shortages have resulted in a reduction in sanitation inspections and that 55% of frontline inspectors feel that there is inadequate staffing to complete all tasks needed to ensure compliance with food safety requirements. He also indicated that the Agency should undertake an audit of its resources prior to undertaking its planned overhaul of its entire food inspection process.

Finally, Mr. Kingston explained that despite the fact that inspectors had been directed to resume all inspection tasks in May 2016, 33% of inspector positions in the Northern Alberta region remain vacant and the daily shift presence “double standard” regarding US exports remains in place.

After I brought Mr. Kingston's letter to the attention of the Committee, members requested that the CFIA provide a written response to the Committee explaining the discrepancy between Mr. Mayer's testimony and the information provided to the Chair in Mr. Kingston's letter. In particular, the Committee would like to know if daily inspections for federal meat processing plants for domestic consumption have been reduced in Northern Alberta and if so, how the Agency intends to resolve this situation, including expected timelines.

Furthermore, the Committee would like to know whether the Agency maintains different inspection standards for products exported to the US in comparison to products for domestic consumption and if so, why this is the case. Finally, the Committee would like to know when the Agency plans to undertake an audit of its resources to ensure it is able to comply with food safety requirements.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to the Committee regarding the concerns raised by Mr. Kingston in relation to food inspections in federal meat processing plants in Northern Alberta. We look forward to receiving your written response in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr. Bill Casey, Member of Parliament
Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health