



For immediate release:

June 21, 2010

Liberals Holland & Easter ask for audit into CFIA's farm animal transport inspection regime

OTTAWA - Liberal Agriculture Critic Wayne Easter and Public Safety & National Security Critic Mark Holland wrote a joint letter to the Auditor General (AG) requesting that she conduct an audit into the Canadian Food Inspection Agency with regard to the agency's performance enforcing Canadian laws and regulations on the transport of farm animals destined for slaughter and entry into the food system.

This request to the AG by Messrs Easter and Holland arose after hearing about disturbing reports that cite numerous and blatant violations of regulations governing the transportation of farm animals. They hope that an audit by the AG will assess whether in fact CFIA has been enforcing Canadians laws and regulations on farm animal transportation; and if not, to determine whether the government is properly resourcing CFIA, in terms of funding and staffing; and to determine whether any enforcement problem is worsening or improving over the last five years.

The issue of farm animal transportation inspection and enforcement normally falls within the purview of Mr. Easter as the Official Opposition's agriculture critic; but, Mr. Easter welcomes in this process the participation of Mr. Holland as a member of the Official Opposition well-known for his efforts to advance animal welfare issues in Parliament. Mr. Holland currently has a private member's bill, numbered C-229, which aims to strengthen animal cruelty provisions in the Criminal Code. C-229 was

formerly a Liberal government justice bill, which the current Conservative government refuses to re-introduce.

Text of the letter follows.

Sheila Fraser
Auditor General of Canada

Dear Ms. Fraser,

We are writing to you today to formally request that you conduct an audit into the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in order to assess CFIA's performance in enforcing Canadian laws and regulations, including *Health of Animals Act*, *Meat Inspection Act* and *Food and Drugs Act*, related to the transportation of farm animals.

Questions that we are seeking answers to include: what resources does CFIA have to enforce laws and regulations pertaining to the transportation of farm animals that ensure the safety of our food system and animal welfare standards; are these resources adequate to meeting existing demand; if not, how are they deficient, and are any problems budgetary or staffing in nature? Lastly, how has CFIA's animal transportation inspection and enforcement changed over time, from 2004-2005 to the latest data available; has CFIA's ability to meet demand and enforce regulations and laws improved or diminished in that period?

The issue of CFIA's animal transport inspection and enforcement system has been under scrutiny with recent media reports detailing blatant violations of regulations and unacceptable levels of animals arriving injured or dead at destinations where they are slaughtered and enter the food system. It is imperative that we ensure that current laws and regulations are properly enforced to minimize farmers' losses and animal suffering, and prevent any risk to the safety of our food system.

We cannot forget how the 2008 listeriosis outbreak at Maple Leaf Foods resulted in illness and death for many Canadians. The tragic event shook the confidence Canadians had in our food inspection system and raised concern that the government is not adequately resourcing CFIA for the critically important responsibilities it has to keep Canadians and the food system safe. Canadians are also concerned about

upholding standards in animal welfare, which recent reports of large scale deaths and injury during transportation does not support and is cause for deep concern.

For these reasons, we are requesting an audit by your office into CFIA's farm animal transport inspection and enforcement system.

We look forward to your response. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Hon. Wayne Easter, MP, *Official Opposition Critic for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

Mark Holland, MP, *Official Opposition Critic for Public Safety & National Security*

For more information:

Karl Maretic, assistant to MP Mark Holland

613-995-8614

hollam5a@parl.gc.ca