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New Legislation Protects Farms and Food Safety

June 17, 2020 — Ontario farm families depend on the safety and security of their farms to raise livestock, and grow and produce food to maintain a strong, reliable food supply.

That's why Ontario's farm and commodity groups applaud the Ontario government for Bill 156, the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020*. Bill 156 strikes an important balance, respecting the right to peaceful public protest while giving the justice system the tools it needs to help protect farms, farmers, livestock, abattoirs and meat processors, and the food supply from trespassing and harassment by groups and individuals.

Our province's agri-food industry contributes more than \$47 billion to the province's annual GDP, and employs over 837,000 Ontarians. Workers across agriculture and the food sector — including farmers and farm workers, transporters, abattoirs, processing plant employees, food service and retail outlets — have experienced threats and harassment from activists seeking to end their industry.

Ninety-seven percent of Canadian farms are family farms. Farms are not only a place of business, they are homes where we welcome family and friends, and raise children.

Increasingly, trespassers are invading farm properties, barns and processing facilities, harassing families and workers, frightening and stealing animals, and threatening food safety by ignoring biosecurity protocols. Farmers and their families deserve to feel safe at home on the farm. Unwanted visitors and trespassers can have devastating impacts on the health and safety of farms, families, businesses and livestock.

Farmers are proud of the care they provide their animals, and animal welfare is of the utmost importance. Ontario farmers are highly regulated, and follow strict codes of conduct to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all farm animals. Preventing trespass on farms, in barns or at processing facilities reduces the risk of distress for animals, and prevents the exposure to potential diseases and pest, keeping farm animals healthy and safe.

Ontario farmers support the newly enacted Provincial Animal Services Act, the strongest animal welfare legislation in the country, which protects animals including livestock from abuse and neglect. We believe in exposing any acts of animal mistreatment or abuse by utilizing existing enforcement services. Anyone who suspects animal abuse or neglect should report directly to the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre, available 24 hours a day.

On behalf of all Ontario farmers, processing facilities and agri-food businesses, we'd like to express our appreciation to the provincial government for taking a strong stance to protect farms and food safety for Ontarians. The *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020* is good news for Ontario's agri-food industry. It will ensure that food safety through the value chain is protected, from farm to table, balanced with allowing an individual's right to protest, while protecting farmers, their families, and livestock.

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