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January 29, 2025

The Hon. Lawrence MacAulay
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Mr. Paul MacKinnon
President, Canadian Food Inspection Agency
59 Camelot Drive, Suite 250
Ottawa, ON K1A 0Y9

Dear Minister MacAulay and CFIA President MacKinnon,

Re: **Urgent Matter, Universal Ostrich Farm, Cull Order. Review requested**

Dear Sirs,

I trust you have been apprised of the troubling situation in Edgewood, BC where the owners of 400 healthy ostriches have been ordered to kill their birds due to a suspected case of Avian Flu. Some of these big beautiful birds have been a part of this family's life for 34 years.

Mr. Minister, as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and you Mr. MacKinnon as CFIA President, have the power to direct those acting as agents of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency "CFIA" to stop the cull and order a review and/or a 30-day extension to confirm a proper diagnosis, review the steps taken by CFIA in this matter and establish the current health status of the herd.

Section 4 (1) of the *Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act*, "the *Act*" states:

Minister responsible

4 (1) The Minister is responsible for and has the overall direction of the Agency. With regard to CFIA President, Mr. Paul MacKinnon, who, under the statute may also have the power to prevent the unnecessary slaughter of these healthy birds and I believe, the ability to order a review. According to the *Act*

President's powers

6 (1) The President is chief executive officer of the Agency and has supervision over and direction of its work and staff. The President has the rank and all the powers of a deputy head of a Department.

It is crucial to understand that the herd is healthy, the older birds never showed signs of illness, the remaining younger birds have recovered. The testing, or lack thereof, carried-out on the 2 deceased birds is at best questionable. Instead of conducting an autopsy, or at the very least taking organ/tissue samples—the “gold standard” for testing—and having proper tests done before ordering 400 magnificent birds culled, your agents, instead decided to only test 2 carcasses, using the highly controversial PCR test kit. As those responsible for the CFIA, and the lives of these birds, you should be deeply troubled by those acting under your direction who decided to only swab the throats and rectums of only two dead birds to justify this pending slaughter.

This is beyond negligent, it is absurd. **An immediate review of this situation is needed.**

Some other facts you may want to question these agents, acting under your direction, about –

1. Why didn't they do proper testing, an autopsy, organ/tissue tests?
2. Why didn't they test for the lab confirmed Pseudomonas? Did anyone inform you that this same farm experienced several deaths in 2020 due to Pseudomonas? Your agents were informed, did they inform you?
3. Did they tell you the tests used to diagnose the Pseudomonas were conducted using tissue samples, a more accurate test. Did they tell you that these tests were done by a CFIA accredited lab?
4. Did they inform you that the symptoms observed on the farm in late 2024 were similar to the 2020 exposure of Pseudomonas?
5. Are you aware that on January 2, 2025, the family was informed that they qualified as a “distinct unit” due to the “valuable genetics” of this herd and the research already in existence.
6. Are you aware that on January 10, 2025, the family was then notified that they didn't qualify as a “distinct unit.” (As you can appreciate, the public's trust in the questionable competency of your agents is reasonable.) What happened over those 8 days that altered this decision, certainly the “value” of the bird's genetics didn't change, so what did?
7. On the day your agents took samples from two dead birds the family requested the healthy birds to be tested also, your agents refused to do any other tests.
8. Your agents failed to test the pond, the feeders and most importantly the fresh feces from the flock of wild ducks that had landed in the pond. This was an important opportunity to identify the source and the pathogen, but your agents weren't interested.
9. Have you been informed that the only symptomatic birds to die were young birds that were not exposed to the 2020 Pseudomonas episode?
10. Have you been informed that this farm provides the scientific community with a living laboratory where these birds can answer questions on natural immunity, antigen production, do vaccinations work or do they contribute to the virus becoming a super bug...?
11. Are you aware that this farm is isolated, and the local farmers are supporting this family and saving the ostriches.
12. Have you asked your agents if any other farm has been affected by any contagion related occurrence? Have they even investigated this? No other deaths on other farm means the pathogen is contained and NOT a threat. Isn't this worth researching?

13. Have you been informed that there have been no more symptomatic-related deaths on the farm since January 14, 2025? If this was Avian, as you know, the death toll on this farm would be climbing rapidly. **Why have there been no more symptomatic deaths?** There is every reason to believe that this wasn't Avian, or if it was these birds have now acquired natural immunity. If so, you as Minister should be the first to declare these birds, and the farm, as being novel and essential to the research dedicated to ensuring the eradication or mitigation of the effects of the Avian Flu on livestock in Canada.

There are a number of other questions that require answering. The above should be sufficient for you to be convinced that this matter **requires an immediate review.**

You have the power and responsibility to provide a 30-day extension to the cull order and order a review. This will provide you with the opportunity to have this matter properly investigated, meet with the family and those in the research and scientific community who are now invested stakeholders in this amazing opportunity to study, learn and perhaps become one of the most important living laboratories in the world that will find a cure.

The CFIA embraces a statement of applicable values that must be seen to be integral to the operations and conduct of those representing the CFIA, not just empty rhetoric. At this juncture you must, if these values are truly applied, order an immediate review, specifically:

- We value scientific rigour and professional and technical competence. These play a crucial role in our decision making. We do not manipulate science to achieve a desired outcome but acknowledge that other factors must be taken into account in this decision making.
- The reputation and credibility of the Agency are vital to our ability to deliver our mandate. As such, we behave, internally and externally, in a way that trust is preserved.

I trust you will give this matter the important and serious consideration it deserves. You have the opportunity to not only save 400 big beautiful healthy ostriches, but to also restore the public's confidence that someone in authority cares about truth, science, professionalism and the trust of Canadians.

Please contact me if you need any more information. The cull/kill date is set for February 1, 2025.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and the opportunity to work collaboratively for the good of all Canadians, and the health and well-being of our livestock and wildlife populations.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

[Your Full Name]

[Your Affiliation, if applicable]