

Prison farm abattoir lease will be up at end of September

Twice over the past three years regular staff and inmates have been busted for illegal activities

BY IAN CUMMING
Ontario Farmer

On the last day of September the lease runs out for the Joyceville prison abattoir. It is owned by Corrections Services Canada (CSC) and has been leased for 26 years to a private company, Wallace Beef.

From 1963 to 1995 the abattoir was operated by prison staff who killed the beef and pork that was consumed by prisoners in several institutions. Since then there has been a continually renewed contract

with Wallace Beef.

Prison beef and pork is now purchased from regular venues.

Internal emails obtained under Access to Information reveal a hunger strike initiated by some Muslim prisoners was one reason cited for that switch after some inmates working in the slaughter facility had reportedly taunted Muslims that they hadn't followed halal protocols when slaughtering that specific beef labeled as such for them.

The abattoir relationship still continued after 2014, with the meat being sold off-site, after other prison abattoirs and the ongoing prison dairy farm was shut down in Kingston by the federal government.

A subsequent government has revived the farms, investing

millions to date in field cropping, with still no promised dairy and goat barn construction and subsequent production taking place.

As of early September, there has been no public statement made by CSC, any local politicians during the election campaign, or even by the Save our Prison Farms organization regarding the abattoir's pending situation.

On Aug. 31, a report on the Joyceville Institution Abattoir was presented to CSC by two abattoir opponents: Calvin Neufeld, from Evolve Our Prison Farms, and Kevin Belanger, the former Inmate Committee Chair for five years at both the Joyceville Minimum and Medium Units.

The report has six chapters, with the evidence presented from internal CSC documents obtained through Access to Information requests, and with most of the information in this report being made public for the first time.

Internal CSC emails reveal the

abattoir was shut down for a month when two police forces were called in to investigate "money laundering and drug-related activity." OMAFRA was also called in at the same time to investigate improper slaughtering and meat handling.

One CSC email stated, "given the inmates we've had down there, I'd say not much consideration of crime."

Belanger states in the report how prisoners were making \$3 an hour slaughtering "but they can make \$500 a day bringing in bales of tobacco."

Twice over the past three years regular staff and inmates have been busted. "The Wallace Beef staff were escorted off the property, never to return again, and the inmates are sent to a higher security immediately by CSC," stated the report.

Allowing prisoners imprisoned due to knife offences to be cleared for slaughter work resulted after an internal email from high up in CSC took issue with the ongoing psychological assessment.

"This delay is effecting their (Wallace Meats) ability to advance and meet financial targets," it stated.

A June 1, 2016 email written some years later stated, "I just found out that psychology has not screened inmates in years," to work in this slaughter facility.

The official reason cited as why that was discontinued was "due to liability concerns."

Dozens of internal CSC emails, some heavily redacted, had many officials highlighting their distrust and ongoing frustrations with the slaughter facility.

The small number of actual inmates working there was also an issue with CSC staff. It was documented that many inmates wanted to quit after only a day or two working there, while the ones that lasted for a long time were probably involved in other profitable activities enhanced by being at the slaughter facility.

"Why are we subsidizing a private company when they aren't employing inmates?" asked a CSC email.

PPC excluded from farm debates

Analyst believes there's a good chance the party will exceed its 1.6 per cent support in the last election

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Two major agriculture debates between opposing parties, held for the Canadian election, did not allow the People's Party of Canada (PPC) to participate.

One was moderated by UPA president Marcel Groleau in Quebec, and the second was moderated by Shaun Haney from RealAgriculture.com, plus a reporter from La Terre de Chez Nous.

"It is not my decision on who is or isn't involved in the debate, I am the moderator," Haney emailed Ontario Farmer.

The PPC was also not allowed to participate in the three party leader debates.

In the last election, the PPC received 1.6 per cent of the vote, but five different polling firms have them between 4.4 and seven per cent, with a far higher percentage in a number of rural ridings.

A recent blog by Duane Rolheiser from Alberta, a former Global and CBC reporter now with his own media website, pointed out that the 1.6 per cent

in the prior election resulted in three ridings going to the Liberals rather than the Conservatives, from whom they siphon votes.

Those were near Kitchener, Richmond Hill and the Yukon. That changed the balance in the minority Parliament just enough that the Liberals and NDP could outvote the Tories and the Bloc, wrote Rolheiser.

Rolheiser pointed to the ongoing polls and with PPC leader Bernier "filling rooms on campaign stops," that there was the potential for this party to "punch well above their weight" on election day.

Independent MPP Randy Hillier has a daughter Chelsea running for the PPC on the outskirts of London and, "she has sold over 1,000 lawn signs and ordered 1,000 more," he said on Labour Day.

"The most I ever had put up was 1,500."

In the recent Nova Scotia election, the independent candidate that the Conservatives had removed from the party during the campaign due to her anti-lockdown stance, was at eight per cent in the polls the day prior to the election.

"Yet she won with 53 per cent," said Hillier. "The media won't be able to spin things on election day. The people have the vote."



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