November 26, 2024

The Honourable Senators of Canada
Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Re: Bill C-293, An Act Respecting Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness

Dear Honourable Senators,

We are writing to express our strong opposition and deep concern regarding Bill C-293, which focuses on pandemic preparedness. While we acknowledge the importance of this Bill and fully support the need for governments to plan more effectively, to manage risks, we believe that certain aspects of the Bill require further scrutiny and clarification.

Section L of the Bill, which recommends "derisking" animal agriculture and promoting alternative proteins, raises significant concerns. This provision appears to be an overreach, as it is not clearly related to pandemic preparedness and instead targets a specific sector of the economy. Animal agriculture is an essential component of our food system, and any policy changes affecting it must be based on clear, evidence-driven risk assessments.

The language in the Bill is dangerously vague and harsh, lacking the necessary details to understand its full implications for both farmers and consumers. Of particular concern, regarding animal agriculture, language such as "regulate", and "phase-out" are utilized. This language suggests that the bill has assumed that animal agriculture in Canada is a cause of, or contributes to, the spread of disease, a notion we unequivocally reject, and further, is not supported by evidence. While the promotion of alternative proteins may have merit in certain contexts, it should not come at the expense of others within the agriculture sector.

We urge the Senate to carefully consider the implications of Section L and ensure that any policies aimed at mitigating future pandemic risks are balanced, evidence-based, and focused on the core issue of public health rather than introducing measures that could unintentionally disrupt our food system.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We trust that you will consider these concerns as you deliberate on the contents of Bill C-293.

Sincerely,

Mel Duvall
Chairman, Agriculture Service Board

Cc. Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for Canada
Hon. R.J. Sigurdson, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation for Alberta
Mr. John Barlow, Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food
Mr. Arnold Viersen, Member of Parliament for Peace River-Westlock
Rural Municipalities of Alberta
Alberta Agricultural Boards
Alberta Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee