



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Editor
Nanaimo News Bulletin

Re: "Proposed meat rules could hurt butchers," Mar. 14, 2006

While I appreciate the effort that MLAs Krog and Routley are making to assist small meat processors, I would note that government is already working to address the industry's concerns, and the concerns of small processing plants in particular, and has been for some time.

My responsibility, as Minister of Agriculture and Lands, is to further develop the agriculture and food industry. One of my main priorities is to expand the meat processing industry in B.C. Provincial slaughter capacity is vital to the agriculture industry, and these province-wide health regulations are necessary to protect consumers, who are insisting upon a consistent and ever more reliable food safety system. These regulations will contribute to the sustainability of the meat processing industry for the long term. The province is very serious about protecting human health by maintaining food safety standards.

We are committed to working closely with producers, processors and members of the public through this transition period to ensure that everyone's concerns are heard. We are examining a number of options which will help sustain small processing plants. As well, the Meat Industry Enhancement Strategy program is available to help producers and processors understand what upgrades are needed to meet the regulations and I encourage them to use this resource. Let me assure you, the ministry actively promotes supporting the local economy by encouraging consumers to purchase product from their local farmers.

I am working with my colleague at the Ministry of Health, Minister Abbott, to explore options to help B.C. livestock slaughter plants and more information will be available soon.

Pat Bell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands
250 387-1023