

# Statement on Kosher Slaughter in Canada

As many are now aware, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the regulatory body which governs animal slaughter in Canada, introduced new guidelines governing animal slaughter in Canada that in effect – if not intention – place shechita (Jewish ritual slaughter) in jeopardy.

Since 1959, when then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's government passed the Humane Slaughter of Food Animals Act which approved shechita as a humane method of slaughter, shechita in Canada progressed unhindered. However, in June of 2023, the CFIA began enforcing new guidelines which render kosher slaughter nearly impossible to sustain. Since these new guidelines have gone into effect, the amount of kosher meat produced in Canada has decreased dramatically. The community has been trying to temporarily supplement this shortfall with imported kosher meat, but this situation is not viable over the long-term.

Kosher slaughter is humane. There is strong scientific evidence supporting this conclusion. Over the past few months, we have produced several reports from experts demonstrating that following shechita, animals rapidly transition to immediate and irreversible insensibility and as a result do not experience any pain. Regrettably, the CFIA has ignored the basic science, relying on inaccurate and flawed, selective literature review.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) together with the Jewish Community Council of Montreal (MK) and the Kashruth Council of Canada (COR) have been working tirelessly with industry stakeholders to try to reach a workable solution with the CFIA, but thus far we have been unsuccessful. While we have not abandoned the effort to secure a negotiated resolution that protects shechita and recognizes it as a legitimate and effective alternative to conventional captive bolt stunning, if that path does not result in meaningful progress, we will be forced to initiate legal proceedings. The Canadian Jewish community is grateful for the religious freedoms guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and if a negotiated resolution cannot be achieved, we are determined to consider legal remedies to ensure that those rights are upheld.

We acknowledge and express deep appreciation for the significant support demonstrated by Federation CJA and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Their commitment reflects the historical reality that one of the hallmarks of a healthy and thriving Jewish community is the stable and secure accessibility of a domestic supply of kosher meat. The Canadian Jewish community is indeed extremely vibrant, and we are determined to preserve its place as one of the leading communities in the Diaspora.

