



Excelsior 4

PRESS RELEASE

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BCSPCA Admits It's Unfit to Enforce Animal Cruelty at Factory Farms in BC, According to Newly Disclosed Documents

Activists Are Calling on BC Agriculture Minister Lana Popham to Replace BCSPCA With More Accountable Government Agency

Vancouver, BC – Newly disclosed documents obtained by animal rights activists reveal the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BCSPCA)—the only animal welfare organization in BC tasked with enforcing animal cruelty laws at factory farms—is unfit to regulate a commercial industry that activists say is rampant with abuse.

In a [letter dated November 6, 2020](#), obtained by a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, BCSPCA Chief Executive Officer Craig Daniell wrote to Deputy Minister of Agriculture Tom Ethier and detailed several problems preventing the organization from carrying out effective animal cruelty enforcement.

"The BCSPCA is growing increasingly skeptical that the Codes of Practice are being implemented on commercial farms," and relying on the private charity to regulate the industry through its enforcement function is "a wholly unacceptable situation," according to Daniell.

Perhaps most alarming is Daniell's admission that, "the BCSPCA, as a donor funded organization, has no capacity to regulate the more than 6000 commercial farms in British Columbia, nor does it wish to be involved in such an endeavour." Daniell suggested that, "what is needed is government mandated regulation and oversight."

Animal rights activists have claimed for years that a private charity is unreliable and ineffective in enforcing the [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#) (PCA) Act at factory farms in BC. As an urgent alternative, activists are [demanding that the Ministry of Agriculture end its contract with the BCSPCA](#) and replace the charity with a more accountable and effective government agency.

"If the BCSPCA says it's incapable of enforcing animal cruelty at factory farms, then we need to stop lining the pockets of a private charity and properly address this problem," said Amy

Soranno, one of the "Excelsior 4," four activists who exposed animal cruelty at the Excelsior Hog Farm in Abbotsford, BC in 2019. The Excelsior 4 are currently being prosecuted by the Crown on several indictable offences and face decades in prison. Meanwhile, Excelsior Hog Farm has so far evaded accountability despite well-documented evidence of animal cruelty.

Not long after the remarkable admissions by Daniell, the BCSPCA made an abrupt reversal. In a [newly disclosed letter dated December 9, 2020 to Minister of Agriculture Lana Popham](#), Daniell requests \$11 million of the 2021 provincial budget for BCSPCA infrastructure and operations, and makes no mention to Popham of the organization's enforcement and capacity concerns.

This reversal was affirmed in another new FOI disclosure—a [January 28 briefing note](#) drafted by the BCSPCA for a February 2 budgetary meeting with Minister Popham. Without explanation, citing only "internal research and discussion," the BCSPCA decided to "continue with [its] enforcement authorities as it relates to the PCA Act on commercial farms and to seek a solution with the government." The briefing note also contends that ***the BCSPCA is not responsible for enforcing violations of Codes of Practice at commercial animal farms*** (emphasis added).

The briefing note explains that the BCSPCA spends \$3.5 million per year investigating approximately 8,500 animal cruelty complaints, but only 10-20 complaints (0.2 percent) are related to commercial farms. In other words, even though the overwhelming majority of animals in BC reside on commercial farms, the BCSPCA spends a fraction of their annual investigation budget on complaints at commercial farms.

"It's unacceptable for the Ministry of Agriculture to continue throwing good money after bad, especially when animal cruelty remains widespread at commercial animal farms like Excelsior Hog Farm," said Soranno. "It seems the BCSPCA is more interested in getting millions of dollars from the provincial government than in prioritizing the welfare of farmed animals. Minister Popham needs to end this charade by replacing the BCSPCA with a more accountable and effective government agency."

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