



Press release

Strike at the Olymel pork processing plant in Vallée-Jonction: Olymel defers to the conciliation process

St-Hyacinthe, Thursday, June 10, 2021 – After learning about the statements made this afternoon by the heads of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA), Éleveurs de volailles du Québec (EVQ) and Éleveurs de porcs du Québec (EPQ) on the ongoing dispute at its hog slaughterhouse, cutting and deboning plant in Vallée-Jonction, Beauce, Olymel management would like to reiterate the facts.

While we are sensitive to the concerns of the Éleveurs de porcs du Québec members who are affected by the ongoing situation since April 28 at our Vallée-Jonction pork processing plant, Olymel management wants to point out that the unlimited general strike was called by the Vallée-Jonction Olymel workers union. The union filed wage requests on April 19 that would have put this plant out of step with its competitors and jeopardized its viability, especially since it already leads its competitors by 21.7% in total compensation. Since this gap cannot be made deeper, Olymel has requested the help of a conciliator from Quebec's Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale. The conciliation meeting started on May 5 and is currently thoroughly underway.

Olymel management has high hopes for this conciliation process and is actively involved in it. A session was held yesterday (June 9), another is taking place today, and five more are scheduled between now and June 23. Olymel management believes that any untimely intervention by third parties in this process could be detrimental to its progress and to the prospect of a quick resolution.

MEASURES IN PLACE FOR HOG FARMERS

Olymel management also wants to point out that it already has put in place numerous measures to mitigate the negative impacts of this dispute on the region's hog farmers who deliver to the Vallée-Jonction plant. As soon as the strike began, the company redirected the purchased hogs in Ontario and Quebec to other slaughterhouses, particularly in the United States and Ontario, to free up space in its other Quebec slaughterhouses for the hogs that were meant for the Vallée-Jonction plant. Olymel is also participating in a piglet sales program in the United States. Olymel's four other Quebec hog slaughterhouses are operating at maximum capacity despite labour constraints and applying strict sanitary measures.

BACKLOG OF HOGS READY FOR SLAUGHTER

Olymel acknowledges that the strike at its Vallée-Jonction plant is putting upward pressure on the number of hogs ready for slaughter, which has now reached 90,000. The company is continuing to work with its suppliers and is exploring all options that could help reduce the number of hogs waiting for slaughter and avoid euthanasia at the farm, as it has done since the beginning of the pandemic.

Finally, apart from the fact that this is a labour relations issue, Olymel believes that there is no comparison to be made between the current dispute at the Vallée-Jonction Olymel plant and the one at Exceldor in St-Anselme.

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