



Media Release

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Tainted Tory Policy Dangerous to Ontario Health

Toronto, ON – In the wake of the Aylmer meat scandal Ontario citizens are faced again with the real cost of the “Common Sense Revolution” — their own health. After years of Tory cutbacks and public service downsizing, it’s clear that essential services like meat inspection never should have been shifted to part-time, private contractors.

“You’d think Walkerton would have taught the Eves government a lesson,” says Michael Fraser, UFCW Canada National Director. UFCW Canada is one of the country’s largest private sector unions. It represents thousands of production workers in the meat packing and processing industry.

“Just like when the Tories contracted out water safety, they’ve done the same with meat inspection. There’s a high turnover because these non-union contractors don’t get a pension or benefits. Many of the new inspectors don’t have enough training. And they’re exhausted because they often have to work 50 hours a week or more to earn a living,” says Fraser.

Before the Tory “revolution” Ontario meat inspectors were fulltime Ontario government employees, and members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. In 1997 the Conservative government chopped the inspection force to only 10 permanent employees; with 130 positions contracted out.

Since then food poisoning has been on the rise, according to a recent report by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. In 2002 alone the report concluded about 60,000 Ontario consumers became ill from contaminated meat and poultry products.

“Blame the Eves government; not the inspectors,” says Fraser. “Inspection is a gruelling job. If you want to improve food safety you have to make sure these inspectors have full time, secure jobs and benefits. Eves and his Conservatives have proven that when you beat up on the public service, the public gets beat up too. Ontario voters won’t get fooled again.”

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