



The Real Beef

A Bulletin for Ontario "Contract" Meat Inspectors
September 2003, #2

Election 2003

You can make a difference to improve the wages and working conditions for contract meat inspectors!

It's about Fairness

All contract meat inspectors want their wages and working conditions improved.

A frozen wage rate since 1993. Travel time and mileage costs not covered. No paid vacation. No benefits. No pension. Inconsistent training and we are left to do the job as best we can. All contract meat inspectors know that the poor working conditions lead to a high turnover rate. Some inspectors can barely make a living.

"Contract" meat inspectors should not be treated any differently than the full-time, permanent meat inspectors – that's the main message contract meat inspectors have been trying to get across the province over the past six months.

Provincial Election: time for Action

During the provincial election, it's more important than ever that all the candidates in your riding

hear about the issues faced by contract meat inspectors.

Since May 2003, contract meat inspectors have spoken out to all major media outlets and to provincial MPPs to get their message out. Others have been guest speakers at events hosted in the agricultural community.

New Group formed

On May 31, 2003, contract meat inspectors met and said we need to start to a group that represents our interests. **The "Ontario Contract Meat Inspectors Group" was launched as a formal group to speak out for contract meat inspectors.**

In June 2003, Helen Johns, Minister of Agriculture, stated to the Ontario Farmer that *"I have the highest training, highest surveillance and highest lab tests in all of Canada and anyone who says we don't have the highest food safety is just wrong."*

Group writes Minister

In July the group wrote to Minister Johns and requested a meeting to review the high turnover rate and concerns about the lack of training. They reminded the Minister that their issues had been studied, but no action was taken. **The Minister did not respond.**

Great Media Response

Overall the response to the issues faced by contract meat inspectors is extremely supportive. **Both the Liberal party and the New Democratic party have pledged to re-hire contract inspectors as permanent employees.**

Both parties want the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Natural Resources to resign given the lack of response to the Aylmer Meat Packers fiasco.

Meanwhile, the Minister and the Tories have been silent about the treatment of contract meat inspectors.

It's time to rebuild our public services. Here's what you can do:

The place to start is the ballot box.

In 1997, the Conservative government laid off all but 8 full-time meat inspectors and replaced permanent jobs with “contract” positions. Major cutbacks hit the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. **Despite promises of improvements, no action has been taken.** We can change that. With all contract meat inspectors working together in this election, we can make a difference.

✓ **On October 2, VOTE for the candidate who will support contract meat inspectors.**

Voter turnout in the last election was low. Your vote can make a difference. Your vote is more important than ever.

✓ **Talk to your candidates**

Ask questions of the people who want to represent you. Talk to them on your doorstep. Both the Liberal party and the New Democratic party have pledged that contract meat inspectors will be re-hired on a permanent basis to ensure they are treated equally as the full-time inspectors. Get a commitment from your local candidate to support the party pledge.

✓ **Attend candidates meetings.**

Ask questions at the all-candidates meeting:

→ How will the candidates support contract meat inspectors?

→ Will they ensure that contract meat inspectors are hired permanently and treated equally so they have benefits, pensions and access to training?

→ How will the candidate improve the food inspection system in the province?

→ What will the candidate do to rebuild the food safety system in Ontario?

✓ **Help a candidate who will support contract meat inspectors**

Call the supportive candidate's campaign office. Offer to take a lawn or a window sign. Wear a button for the candidate. Volunteer to canvass door-to-door to talk to your neighbours.

✓ **Tell your friends, your neighbours and family to vote**

Talk to your friends and family about your issues. Encourage them to vote for the candidate who will support contract meat inspectors.

Contact us for further information. We will help get you plugged in.

Ontario Contract Meat Inspectors Group: 1-800-268-7376 ext. 383

www.meatinspectors.org