



The Real Beef

A Bulletin for Ontario "Contract" Meat Inspectors
October 2003, #3

OPSEU grievance starts

Legal proceedings on status of 'contract' meat inspectors before mediator/arbitrator

OPSEU Grievance

The overall goal of the contract meat inspectors campaign is to improve the wages and working conditions of 'contract' meat inspectors.

A key strategy in the campaign is OPSEU's policy grievance on 'bargaining unit integrity'. The grievance was filed in 2002 and covered a wide range of positions in the Ontario public service. The meat inspector's positions are part of this broad policy grievance.

Mediation on the meat inspectors' positions started on October 20 2003.

In this grievance, OPSEU argues that the employer has wrongfully contracted out work of the bargaining unit. If work is done by bargaining unit members, then all positions should be in the OPSEU bargaining unit.

Your Legal Status

'Contract'; meat inspectors, while employees, were left outside of the bargaining unit by a legal loophole in the *Public Service Act*.

'Contract' meat inspectors were not appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor as crown employees.

With 'a-stroke-of-the-pen', however, 'contract' meat inspectors could be made crown employees and have the entitlements under the collective agreement.

In a nutshell, that's what this grievance is about – to ensure the Ministry appoints meat inspectors as *crown* employees.

How long will the grievance process take?

The grievance process starts with mediation. The first day was October 20, 2003. The next

mediation/arbitration dates are November 20 and 21, 2003.

How fast the process moves depends on the willingness of the new government to move quickly. We will have a clearer picture in November about how long it will take.

Mediation slowed by change in government

Unfortunately, the Oct. 20 mediation date fell in the timeperiod between the new and the old governments. Neither the 'old' government nor 'new' government can agree to new government spending during this interval. A shift in the status of contract meat inspectors' employment would have required new money to be spent.

On October 20, the parties (OPSEU and the Crown) explored their respective position. OPSEU had a position. The Crown

did not. Earl Yantzi and Brian Burdick, both 'contract' inspectors, attended to offer their expert opinion to OPSEU.

The position of OPSEU is with a stroke of the pen, 'contract' meat inspectors can be rolled over into crown employee status that matches the current mix of full-time, part-time and seasonal positions.

With a new government and a new Minister in place, we expect to see faster action on November 20. Mediation will continue. Where the parties cannot agree, the arbitrator may be called into rule on the matter.

Election 2003 Results

Ontario's food safety system and the wages and working conditions of meat inspectors became a huge issue during the provincial election in September. Largely do the work of the 'Contract' Meat Inspectors Group, the food safety stayed on the front page for most of the election period. Congratulations to everyone for their hard work.

Spokespeople for the group became credible

sources of information about the food safety system for the media province-wide.

As a result, Ontario has, not only a new government, but also a new Minister who are well aware of the issues faced by 'contract' meat inspectors.

The Liberals campaigned on holding a public inquiry into the Aylmer Meat Packers scandal and promised to rehire full-time inspectors.

We have written to the new Minister, Steve Peters to congratulate him on his appointment and requested a meeting to review the issues faced by 'contract' meat inspectors.

Survey Results

In September, four contract meat inspectors conducted a phone survey of their fellow inspectors. You may have received a call. Forty-six (46) or about 38 per cent of the 121 contract inspectors participated. *A copy of the survey results is enclosed with this bulletin.* The results certainly won't surprise you and some include:

- 57% said they have concerns about health and

safety when working as an inspector.

- 74% said they have concerns that hours could be cut back by their area manager
- 60% have concerns about enforcement and the most common remark was that, as front-line inspectors OMAF management doesn't back you up.

Next Steps? What you can do

Two pieces of action are in the works: trying to secure a meeting with the new Minister and the OPSEU grievance. We need to ensure the issues of 'contract' meat inspectors are not lost. You can do two things:

1. **Call you newly elected MPP, especially if they are Liberal.** Tell them that you are a contract meat inspector and that you expect that they will fulfill their election promise.
2. **Get involved** with the 'Contract' Meat Inspectors Group. Call 1-800268-7376 ext 383. Be contact for your area. Tell us your concerns. Tell us your ideas.

For further information contact:

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Check out the website at: www.meatinspectors.org