



**Ontario Contract Meat Inspectors Group
c/o 100 Lesmill Road
North York, Ontario
M3B 3P8**

July 17, 2003

Minister Helen Johns
Ministry of Agriculture and Food
77 Grenville St.
11th Floor
Toronto, ON M5S 1B3

Sent via Ministry fax: 416-326-3083

Sent via Constituency office fax: 519-524-4154

Dear Madame Minister;

We are writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Contract Meat Inspectors Group to request a meeting to discuss our concerns about the meat inspection system in the province.

You have stated publicly that you are unsure of the turnover rate of contracted meat inspectors and that all of our concerns are wage related (Ontario Farmer, June 2003).

We want to remind you that two meat inspectors met with you on January 7, 2003. At that time, they presented you with a letter signed by over 12 meat inspectors that outlined the issue of the high turnover rate. In that meeting, they explained that the turnover rate is estimated to be, at least, 30%.

We can assure you the turn over rate remains very high. In some areas it may be as high as 40%. We know of, at least, six inspectors who have quit in the past month. At this rate, the turnover in meat inspectors would be much higher than the 30%. We want to reiterate that in our profession having an experienced, well-trained eye is very critical to protecting food safety.

Some of our concerns are wage related. Surely you can understand that when the costs of the provincial food safety system are put on the backs of individual contract meat inspectors, we will take issue. Some contract meat inspectors can earn more money working as a cashier paid just above minimum wage than

working in the provincial meat inspection system. Is that the way you want to run the food safety system in this province?

We are deeply concerned that the food safety system is compromised by the high turnover rate, the lack of a comprehensive training program and the failure to provide contract meat inspectors with a sound human resource plan. In 2001 your own Ministry responded to the Report of the Provincial Auditor that *the success of the food safety system is highly dependent on recruitment, retention and training of staff*. Unfortunately, over the past two years the situation has gotten worse. Our situation has been studied by human resources consultants, but no action has been taken.

We look forward to hearing from you prior to August 8, 2003. We are willing to meet either in Toronto or at your constituency office at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Brian Burdick
(705)730-741-1703

Earl Yantzi
(519)392-6743.

On behalf of the Ontario Contract Meat Inspectors Group

c.c. Peter Kormos, MPP, Niagara Centre
Steve Peters, MPP, Elgin-Middlesex-London