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Honourable Helen Johns
Minister of Agriculture and Food
11th Floor, 77 Grenville Street
Toronto, Ontario
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July 22, 2003

Dear Minister;

I am writing you today to raise an issue I have raised on countless occasions with yourself and your predecessors; the very serious issue of your Ministry insisting on the use of "contract" employees for Ontario's meat inspection program. The difficulties with this practice are many and have been pointed out to your government repeatedly.

Turnover rates are of extreme concern. In the past month at least six of these inspectors have resigned from OMAF. This is higher than 30% and completely unacceptable. When our Ministry spends a great deal of time and resources training inspectors it is foolhardy to treat them like second class employees, only to be scooped up by either CFIA or the private sector. This has the potential to seriously compromise food safety.

In 2001, in response to the Provincial Auditor's Report your own Ministry responded that, "*the success of the food safety system is highly dependent on recruitment, retention and training of staff.*" Thanks to your government's ideological obsession with privatization and contracting out of essential government services, this success seems elusive at best.

It is my understanding that you met with representatives of the contract meat inspectors in January of this year. You referred them to Dr. Baker, who has yet to follow up on any of their recommendations and suggestions. Given the increasing attention to food safety issues and concerns, do you not think it time for your Ministry to reconsider its treatment of arguably its most important employees?

Minister, I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Steve Peters MPP

Cc: Ontario Contract meat Inspectors Group
Leah Casselman