

# Speaking Notes

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Winnipeg

Thursday, August 20, 2015

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Good morning and thanks for coming out.

My name is Bob Kingston. I am President of the federal food inspectors' union. Before taking this job I worked as an inspector for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, including 15 years as an inspection supervisor.

With me is Chris Aylward, the National Executive Vice-President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

This morning we are looking at what Canadians want from their federal government when it comes to food safety and inspection versus the level of inspection actually delivered.

We know from a national survey conducted by Nanos Research just a few weeks ago that what voters want and what the government is delivering could not be more starkly different.

Canadians do not trust the food industry to police its own safety practices. Yet, the government is relying more heavily on food production companies to self-police.

The overwhelming majority of voters trust government inspectors and scientists to ensure the food we eat is safe. Yet, there are fewer people working at the CFIA than at any time since the Maple Leaf Foods listeriosis outbreak in 2008 that killed 22 people.

Most voters think the federal government should invest more resources and be more hands on in policing the safety of food. Yet, the government is doing precisely the opposite with plans to cut meat inspector positions and funding.

This reality has not gone unnoticed for the majority of Canadians, the majority of whom are not confident that there are enough food inspectors to properly inspect the food we eat.

Concerns about the shortage of inspectors are well-founded.

We are releasing this morning a detailed staffing review which has found that every meat slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba is operating with substantially fewer than the minimum number of meat inspectors required to ensure consumer safety.

This includes the giant Maple Leaf Foods hog slaughter establishment in Brandon which typically operates 34% below minimum inspection staff.

At the same time, Dunn-Rite Food Products slaughter facility typically operates almost 60% below the minimum staffing level required to ensure consumer safety.

These results are typical for all of Canada.

Why?

You may not know this because there has been no press release from Ottawa, but the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is in the process of downsizing its meat inspection staff and program after the Harper government cut its budget.

The Agency plans to eliminate 273 positions as it grapples with a \$35 million budget cut.

The staffing review found the shortage in the four major Manitoba slaughter facilities so acute that inspectors working in the province's meat processing facilities are often "borrowed" to cover glaring inspection gaps in slaughter establishments.

Because inspection teams working in Manitoba's federally licenced processing and cold storage facilities barely meet minimum staffing levels, this like robbing the poor to pay the destitute.

Identifying potential contamination problems in slaughter houses is difficult at the best of times given the pace of production permitted in Canada.

For example, at maximum production the Maple Leaf slaughter establishment in Brandon can process 18,000 hogs a day. That translates to almost 20 hogs every minute when the plant works at capacity during its usual two production shifts.

Line speeds in poultry processing plants are also impossibly fast, exceeding the safe pace set south of the border by the USDA.

Without action to address the inspection shortage, it is just a matter of time before the next major food borne illness outbreak occurs. Unfortunately, the federal government is cutting rather than fixing the food inspection system.

Chris...

For those voters who expect more than the federal government is delivering on food safety now is a very good time to voice your concerns before the federal election on October 19th.

And you can do that by visiting [www.foodsafetyfirst.ca](http://www.foodsafetyfirst.ca) where you can easily send a message to the candidates seeking your vote.

Those candidates will be interested to know that the Nanos survey we have published today found that 60% of voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who favours increasing the number of inspectors versus only 6% are more likely to vote for a candidate who favours allowing food companies to police their own safety practices.

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