



**FIX THE
INSPECTION
DEFICIT TO
MAKE OUR
FOOD SAFE**

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**DO YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
PACKING IN
YOUR CHILD'S
LUNCH BAG
EVERY DAY?**

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Hazards like bacteria, parasites and viruses in food can make your child very sick.

The following pages highlight the potential hazards and health effects associated with everyday food items typically found in a child's lunch bag.

Even the most conscientious parent following safe food handling and storage practices cannot eliminate the hazards that may already exist in food from the field or factory.

That's the job of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) – to oversee and enforce food safety regulations.

But, Ottawa has short changed the CFIA, forcing the Agency to make do with too few inspectors while handing off more responsibility to food companies to police themselves when it comes to safety. Food inspectors no longer know if food companies are living up to safety requirements.

Canadians are paying the price. It is estimated that between 11 and 13 million Canadians fall victim to a food borne illness every year.

Symptoms can include diarrhea, vomiting, stomach cramps and fever. In some cases, often involving young children and the elderly, these illnesses can lead to hospitalization, long-term health complications, and worse...

The shortage of inspectors means that the CFIA simply cannot meet its mandate to prevent food borne illness.



LEAFY GREENS

BACTERIA: SALMONELLA and E. COLI O157:H7

On your sandwich or in your salad, leafy greens contaminated with hazards like Salmonella or Listeria monocytogenes can result in serious illness or death.

! Salmonella

During the past five years, the CFIA has issued 15 Health Hazard Alerts warning consumers about possible *Salmonella* contamination of sandwich and salad items commonly found in the produce department of your grocery store. Meanwhile, the Canadian Public Health Agency (PHAC) reports 58 *Salmonella*-related outbreaks that made 289 people ill in 2006 and 55 outbreaks that sickened 1086 people in 2005.*

More than 2400 different serotypes of *Salmonella* – such as *Salmonella* Typhimurium and *Salmonella* Newport – have been identified.

COMPLICATIONS

Salmonella can lead to Reiter's syndrome (pain in the joints, eye irritation and painful urination), which can last for months or years.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to develop severe infections, leading to hospitalization, from *Salmonella*.

In the US, children under the age of five are diagnosed with an infection from *Salmonella* at a rate that is five times higher than that for the general population.**

In 2008, Canadians ate \$350 million worth of leafy greens imported from the US. Source: Industry Canada Trade data.

! E. coli O157:H7

The US reports widespread produce contamination by *E. coli*. With our reliance on US produce imports, this is a concern for Canadian consumers and policy-makers.

From 1990 to 2006, US states reported 35 outbreaks with over 1,100 people becoming ill from eating leafy greens contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7.

There are multiple strains of *E. coli*, many of which do not make people sick. However, *E. coli* O157:H7 is only one of a number of types of this bacteria that produce deadly toxins (known as "Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*" or "STEC").

COMPLICATIONS

Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) occurs in 5–10% of illnesses from *E. coli* O157:H7. This life-threatening complication, with symptoms that include decreased frequency of urination and listlessness, can lead to kidney failure and death.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

When exposed to *E. coli*, very young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to develop severe illnesses, like HUS, but even healthy older children and young adults can become seriously ill and require hospitalization.

* The PHAC warns that these data are estimates only and that the actual number of outbreaks and illness is much higher.

**US data is used throughout this publication given the increasingly globalized nature of food production. Similar data is not available in Canada.



READY-TO-EAT MEAT PRODUCTS

BACTERIA: LISTERIA MONOCYTOGENES, SALMONELLA and E. COLI

You may be adding *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella* or *E. coli* along with cold cuts and other ready-to-eat meat products in your child's lunch.

! *Listeria monocytogenes*

During the past five years, the CFIA has issued 27 Health Hazard Alerts to warn consumers about the possible contamination of ready-to-eat meat products by *Listeria monocytogenes*. Twenty-two people died in 2008 as a result of eating Maple Leaf Foods cold cuts contaminated by this bacteria.

COMPLICATIONS

Listeria monocytogenes can cause a serious disease called *listeriosis*, which can lead to brain infection and death.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Pregnant women and their unborn and newborn children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to develop *listeriosis*.

! *E. coli*

The Canadian Public Health Agency reports that 31 outbreaks of *E. coli* made 283 people ill in 2006 and 33 outbreaks sickened 152 people in 2005.

There are multiple strains of *E. coli*, many of which do not make people sick. However, *E. coli* O157:H7 is only one of a number of types of this bacteria that produce deadly toxins (known as "Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*" or "STEC").

COMPLICATIONS

Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) occurs in 5–10% of illnesses from *E. coli* O157:H7. This life-threatening complication, with symptoms that include decreased frequency of urination and listlessness, can lead to kidney failure and death.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

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TOMATOES

BACTERIA: SALMONELLA and SHIGELLA

You may be adding hazards like Salmonella or Shigella along with the tomatoes on your child's sandwich.

! Salmonella

From 1990 to 2006, US states reported 17 outbreaks with over 1,900 people becoming ill from eating tomatoes contaminated with *Salmonella*.

More than 2,400 different serotypes of *Salmonella*—such as *Salmonella* Typhimurium and *Salmonella* Newport—have been identified.

COMPLICATIONS

Salmonella can lead to Reiter's syndrome (pain in the joints, eye irritation and painful urination), which can last for months or years.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to develop severe infections, leading to hospitalization, from *Salmonella*. Children under the age of five are diagnosed with an infection from *Salmonella* at a rate that is five times higher than that for the general population.

In 2008, Canadians ate \$300 million worth of tomatoes imported from the US. Source: Industry Canada Trade data. With our reliance on imported US fruits and vegetables and the globalized nature of the food industry today, the US experience cannot be ignored by Canadian consumers and policy-makers.

! Shigella

In 2001, 886 people across the US became ill from eating tomatoes contaminated with *Shigella*.

COMPLICATIONS

Approximately two percent of people who are infected with *Shigella* later develop Reiter's syndrome (pain in their joints, eye irritation and painful urination).

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Children, especially toddlers age two to four, are the most likely to get an infection from *Shigella*.



BERRIES

(STRAWBERRIES and RASPBERRIES)

PARASITE: CYCLOSPORA • VIRUS: HEPATITIS A

Cyclospora or Hepatitis A contaminating your berries can make anyone in your family sick.

! Hepatitis A

From 1990 to 2006, US states reported five outbreaks with over 350 people becoming ill from eating berries contaminated with Hepatitis A.

COMPLICATIONS

Hepatitis A can cause liver failure. Recovery can take months or even years. The virus can also be fatal.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Hepatitis A occurs more commonly in persons 50 years of age or older and persons with other liver diseases, such as Hepatitis B or C.

Canada imported more than \$600 million worth of berries from the United States in 2008. *Source: Industry Canada Trade Data*

! Cyclospora

From 1990 to 2006, states reported 11 outbreaks with over 2,700 people becoming ill from eating berries contaminated with *Cyclospora*.

COMPLICATIONS

Untreated, *Cyclospora* infection can lead to severe dehydration. Severely dehydrated people, those with compromised immune systems, older adults, and infants and young children (who become dehydrated more easily than adults) may need to be hospitalized to receive salts and fluids intravenously.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Persons of all ages are at risk of infection. All infections require medical treatment.



PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH CRACKERS

BACTERIA: SALMONELLA

Even highly processed foods aren't free from problems. Hundreds of people became ill and nine died in the US within the last year as a result of eating peanut butter or products containing peanut paste (like cookies, crackers, and ice cream) that were contaminated with Salmonella.

! Salmonella

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to develop severe infections, requiring hospitalization, from *Salmonella*.

Children under the age of five are diagnosed with an infection from *Salmonella* at a rate that is five times higher than that for the general population.

With our reliance on imported US products and the globalized nature of the food industry today, the US experience cannot be ignored by Canadian consumers and policy-makers.

LAST YEAR, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES BECAME ILL AND NINE DIED as a result of eating peanut butter or products containing peanut butter that were contaminated by *Salmonella*.

In Canada, the CFIA issued 57 Health Hazard Alerts associated with the outbreak. Data on the number of Canadians made ill is not currently available.

More than 3,800 products containing peanuts or peanut paste were recalled in the 2009 outbreak, including cookies, crackers, cereal, candy and ice cream. Over half of the 700 people who became ill were under age 16.

The US Food and Drug Administration reported that the company responsible for the contaminated peanut products found *Salmonella* in its products 12 times in 2007 and 2008, yet continued to ship them to consumers.



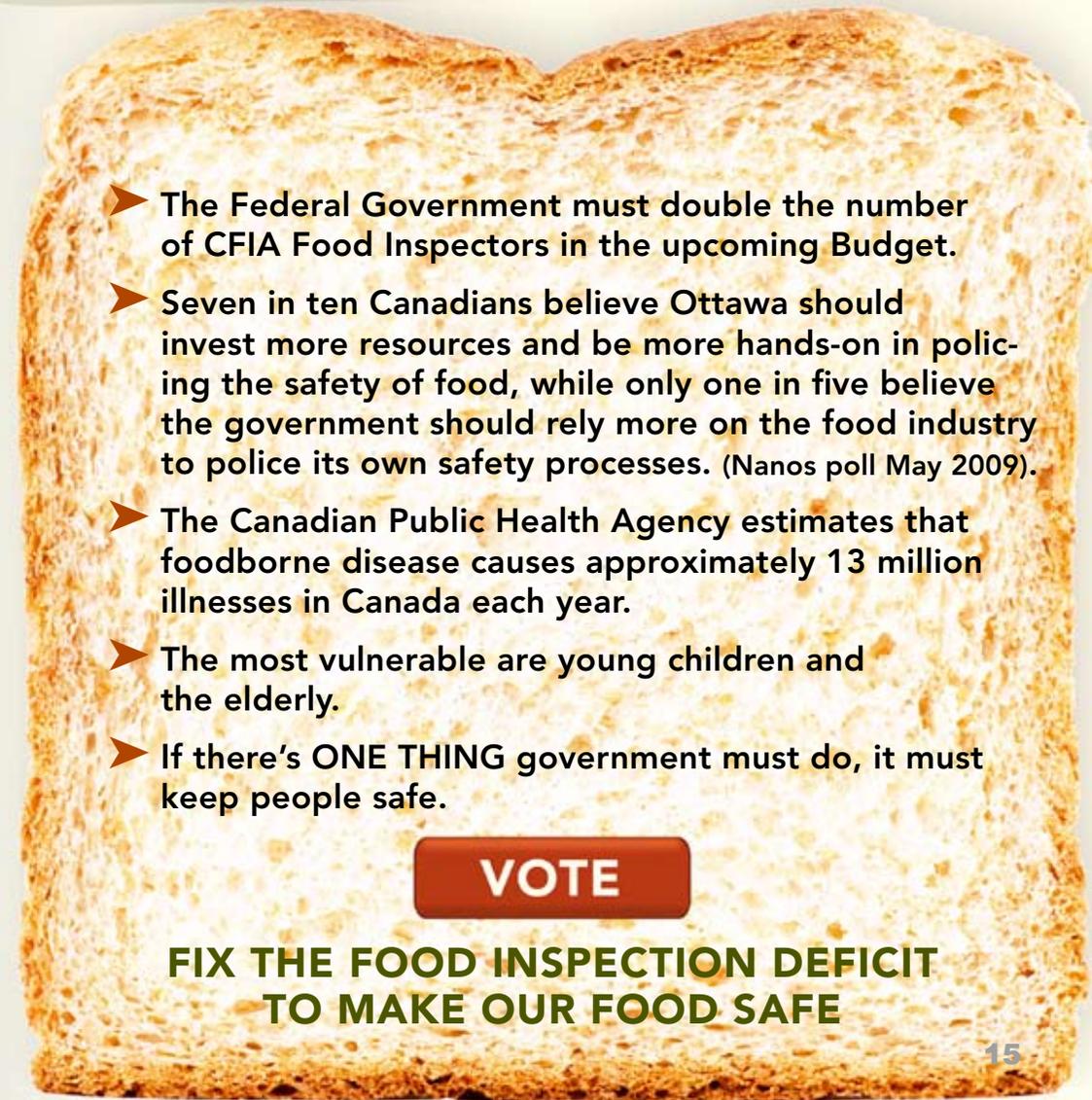
The INSPECTION DEFICIT

Food contamination has never been so widespread. At the same time, our ability to inspect and oversee food imports and domestic production is strained to the breaking point.

Foodborne bacteria, viruses and parasites that can be found in your child's lunch come from a vast range of sources. We import food from all around the world. In addition, hundreds of food factories and thousands of farms in Canada produce everything from cold cuts to salad and dairy products to fish.

With the inspection resources currently available this territory is far too vast to ensure the food we eat is safe.

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