

# Food industry not trusted to police itself, poll suggests

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[CBC News](#)

A majority of Canadians believe that allowing the food industry to police itself puts the public health at risk, according to a new poll.

The survey, commissioned by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, suggests eight of every 10 Canadians want the current government to reverse a decision to cut food safety program budgets.

According to the poll, 64 per cent of respondents trusted government inspectors and scientists to ensure the safety of food, but just 25 per cent said they had the same trust in food industry employees.

"Canadians trust government professionals to safeguard the food they eat, not the food industry," Michele Demers, president of the institute, said in a statement.

According to the poll, a minority of Canadians were comfortable with the industry policing itself: 22 per cent surveyed said they would accept an increase in reliance on industry self-policing, while 73 per cent said they would like to see their government invest more resources and play a more hands-on role.

As of April 1, a new federal policy was put in place to allow the food industry to submit reports to food inspectors, instead of having inspectors on the factory and slaughterhouse floors.

The policy followed a 12 per cent cut to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency budget that would come over the next three years.

The issue of food safety was front and centre earlier this month after a nationwide listeriosis outbreak that was linked to bacterial contamination at a Maple Leaf's Foods plant in Toronto. So far, 19 people have died from listeriosis related to that outbreak.

Since then, industry groups have pressured the federal Conservatives to reverse the policy and increase spending on food safety.

"Consumers are now well aware that allowing industry to police itself puts their health at risk," Anu Bose of the consumer advocacy organization, Option consommateurs, said in a statement. "They will be looking for clear commitments from politicians of all parties that they will end this high-risk practice."

The institute representing food scientists at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has urged all federal election candidates to make a full commitment to food safety and is encouraging voters to consider this when choosing a candidate in the upcoming federal election.

Nanos Research conducted the survey by randomly calling 1,200 Canadians between Sept. 20 and Sept. 22. The margin of accuracy for this sample is 2.8 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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