



NEWS RELEASE

Ted Arnott, MPP
Wellington - Halton Hills

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Government red tape burning local bakery

(Queen's Park) – Excessive red tape is one ingredient a local bakery could do without. But that's just what Miller's Scottish Bakery of Georgetown is getting from the McGuinty government.

Staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs told the bakery's owners that, unless they paid for exorbitantly expensive capital renovations, they could no longer wholesale their Scotch meat pies. That left the bakery with no choice but to lay off their staff.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott has taken their fight to Queen's Park.

"This government's policies may drive a local bakery out of business, but the Minister of Agriculture and Food is completely oblivious," he charged today after taking the Minister to task during Question Period on February 28.

Ironically, Miller's Bakery will be allowed to continue selling their Scotch pies to retail customers.

Mr. Arnott has visited Miller's on three separate occasions, speaking with owners Phil and Wendy Miller, their staff, as well as their satisfied customers. "Their Scotch pies are the best I've ever tasted!" he said.

"It seems ridiculous that the Ministry is applying regulations meant for a meat packing plant to a bakery," observed Mr. Arnott. "The Minister doesn't seem to know the difference."

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Attached: Ontario Hansard

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FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Miller's Scottish Bakery of Georgetown has been in business for more than 20 years and they make the most delicious Scotch pies I've ever tasted. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's food inspection branch appears to want to put Miller's bakery out of business. The ministry is telling Miller's bakery to spend up to \$50,000 on capital upgrades because they wholesale meat pies. It is a relatively small but profitable part of their business, and crucial to their bottom line. The ministry is treating Miller's as if they were a meat processing plant, but they are not a meat processing plant; they are a bakery. Does the minister know the difference?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I certainly want to thank the members from the opposite side of the House for the question. I can tell you that food safety is our number one priority. I'm going to just speak specifically to the abattoir issue, and then I'm going to expand even more in my supplementary.

We recognize that-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Minister?

1130

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do want to thank you for speaking to this. Specifically, with the small abattoirs, as I said, I'll speak to that first; then, in the supplementary, I'll speak to that.

We recognize the contribution that our rural, local abattoirs-how critical of a piece they are in the local food. We committed \$1.5 million in order to assist, to bring-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Georgetown families are paying the price for the McGuinty government being so out of touch that they appear not to know the difference between a meat plant and a bakery.

Because of this ministry's arbitrary decision, Miller's bakery laid off all their staff-eight people-in that first week. It's ironic that Miller's bakery is allowed to sell their meat pies directly to their customers-which implicitly acknowledges that the ministry believes the food is safe-but they are unable to wholesale the very same pies without pushing their business into a loss position, costing jobs for Ontario families. This is overkill. The McGuinty nanny state has gone way too far. It's time for a change in Ontario.

Will the minister commit to reviewing this matter, instructing her staff to find a reasonable solution which will allow this small business, Miller's bakery, to remain open, profitable, employ their staff and serve their customers as they've done for the last 20 years?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I can tell you-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I hope they give me the opportunity to answer this very important question.

On this side of the House, we invested \$80 million in local food. I can tell you that food safety is our number one priority. It isn't on that side of the House. They fired meat inspectors-we hired meat inspectors-as if food safety was not what the people of Ontario wanted. That's why it's our number one priority. It is not their priority. They did not make the investments in local food, they did not make the investments in rural economic development, and then they stand in the House and say that if they were given the opportunity again they would fire meat inspectors again.

They don't care about the quality of food. They don't care about the safety of their food. On this side of the House, we care. It's an important, critical piece, and we stand-food safety is our number one priority, and we're proud of our record and the investments we have made in rural Ontario. I can-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark will please come to order. The insistent heckling is hard on my ear.

New question.