

V3-11

MAY 24, 2000

Town of Walkerton Has E.coli Outbreak

Medical Officer of Health, Dr. M. S. McQuigge expressed his appreciation and extended thanks to the Walkerton, Hanover and Owen Sound Hospitals for the great work that has been done (and continues to be done) with regards to the outbreak of E.coli 0157 in Walkerton.

Dr. McQuigge stated that the majority of cases started to show symptoms on Wednesday, May 17th, 2000, Thursday, May 18th and Friday, May 19th although he believes the exposure to E.coli 0157 likely began between Friday, May 12th and Monday, May 15th, 2000. (Incubation Period for E.coli

0157 ranges from two to eight days, but most people get it two to four days after being exposed).

The Press were informed that the bulk of the cases are people living in Walkerton or have recently visited Walkerton.

The number of cases (as of the 23rd of May) was 160 documented cases of diarrhea that have been treated at area Hospitals in Walkerton, Hanover and Owen Sound. In addition, there have been about 400 calls to those hospitals from adults and children with diarrhea. (As of the 23rd, there are eleven people hospitalized (some have even been taken to Owen Sound and to London).

BOIL WATER

On May 21st, the Bruce Grey Owen Sound Health Unit advised all the residents in the Town of Walkerton to boil their drinking water, or use bottled water until further notice.

The water should be boiled for FIVE MINUTES prior to consumption. This recommendation is being made due to the significant increase in cases of diarrhea in Walkerton over the past several days.

Although the Walkerton PUC is not aware of any problems with their water system, this advisory is being issued by the Bruce Grey Owen Sound Health Unit as a precaution until more information is

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FINAL EDITION

THURSDAY, JULY 27, 2000

60 CENTS INCLUDES GST - HIGHER IN BOXES AND OUTSIDE WATERLOO REGION

Emotions flow in Walkerton

By Brent Davis
RECORD STAFF

WALKERTON — Grief. Uncertainty. A loss of innocence. A betrayal of trust.

Those were some of the sentiments expressed Wednesday night to the man who will head the public inquiry into the deadly E. coli outbreak in Walkerton that claimed six lives and sickened thousands more.

Justice Dennis O'Connor met with about 150 residents and community

leaders at the town's Knights of Columbus Hall in the first of a series of informal sessions before the start of the inquiry, likely in October.

"We are here to hear from the people of Walkerton, to try and gain some understanding of what it is you've been through," he said in his opening remarks.

Earlier in the day, the coroner's office released its findings on the number of deaths in the outbreak.

Four people died as a direct result of

E. coli, the coroner's office said. In two other cases, E. coli was a contributing factor.

Deputy chief coroner Dr. Jim Cairns called the bacteria "the straw that broke the camel's back" in the two cases in which other diseases played a major role in the patients' deaths.

"These two people had very serious illnesses from which they could have died at any time.

"Would they have been dead on that

day, at that time, if they didn't get E. coli? No, they wouldn't have," he said.

O'Connor, a member of the Ontario Court of Appeal, listened intently, often nodding or taking notes, as a handful of speakers told their stories in Walkerton.

Pastor Beth Conroy of Trinity Lutheran Church spoke of those who have told her they'll never drink the town's water again, regardless of the assurances that a safe water system will be restored.

"We trusted it before and look what happened," she said.

She told O'Connor of the town's grief, made very public by the hordes of media that descended on the small community. Those hordes were back again on Wednesday, although cameras were not allowed inside the meeting room.

The media intrusion came as a mixed blessing, Conroy said.

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