

Man asks Region to make food safety bigger priority

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

A glut of food safety woes in Toronto restaurants has at least one Halton resident hoping to avoid the same trouble here.

Duane Frerichs of Halton Hills appeared before the Region's health and social services committee last Tuesday to ask that food safety become a priority.

"I don't know if it's a major problem in Halton, but I think it should be addressed," he said.

Currently, there isn't enough information to make educated

choices about local restaurants, he claimed.

And too many residents are fooled into thinking that if a restaurant is open, it must be okay.

But a scarcity of health inspectors means restaurants may remain open due to inadequate controls, said Mr. Frerichs.

"Probably the major one is a lack of inspectors due to budget pressures," said Mr. Frerichs.

The addition of another health inspector has been placed for consideration in the upcoming budget, responded Halton's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal.

That would help the Region meet

provincial minimum requirements for food inspection.

Mr. Frerichs also asked that an easily-accessible rating system be devised so customers can read the safety of an establishment at a glance.

Mandatory certification for at least one on-shift food handler was also on Mr. Frerichs' wish list.

As that's a provincial jurisdiction, the committee agreed to request certification from the Province. It also asked for Ontario-wide policies on publicizing inspection information.

But Mr. Frerichs felt that change begins at home.

"I think that Halton Region is the master of its own house and there's many things it can do," he said. "Sometimes you have to take a leadership role."

Though not opposed to tightening up controls, Dr. Nosal stood behind Halton's current policy.

"I give my word that there isn't one restaurant in Halton that I wouldn't eat at due to safety concerns," he said. "I'm confident in the program and I'm confident in food safety."

And Halton chair Joyce Savoline, Dr. Nosal and Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale noted that residents don't always stay within regional borders when dining out.

Region falling below minimum standards

Halton is falling behind minimum provincial standards when it comes to inspecting local restaurants.

Last year, 100 per cent of all high and medium-risk restaurants were visited by a health inspector, according to a Regional staff report.

Eighty per cent of high-risk restaurants were visited three or more times, while 55 per cent of

medium-risk sites were visited at least twice by a health inspector.

Finally, 70 per cent of low-risk establishments were inspected.

But according to Ontario guidelines, high-risk facilities should be visited once every four months and medium-risk sites every six months.

Low-risk establishments are to be visited once a year.



Voted Best Internet Service Provider!



WEBSITE DESIGN & HOSTING

We can put your business on the internet from only

\$9⁹⁹ /month

876-3918

225 Main St. E. Suite #3

www.interhop.net

Check Us Out For Selection, Price & Service

SPRING RATE BREAK

Purchase up to 48 months*

2000 Cavalier

1.9%

Lease up to 36 months*

2000 Venture Van

Value Pricing
The affordable way to buy a car or truck.

RICHARDSON
CHEVROLET-OLDSMOBILE

878-2393

HWY. 25 S. AT DERRY RD., MILTON

SALES HOURS		SERVICE HOURS	
Mon.-Thurs.	8am-9pm	Mon.-Fri.	8am-5pm
Friday	8am-9pm	Tues.	8am-5pm
Saturday	9am-5pm	Saturday	9am-2pm

* O.A.C. See sales rep for details