

# Weekend Champion

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## Drury students hit by E. Coli outbreak

*Food poisoning at grad dinner likely the cause*

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

*The Champion*

At least 56 E.C. Drury High School students are showing symptoms of E. Coli infection in connection with what should have been one of the best nights of their lives.

The latest outbreak figures were announced yesterday afternoon by Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of health, at an impromptu press conference at Halton Region's Oakville headquarters.

Dr. Nosal said it seems the students contracted the illness at their June 25 graduation dinner, held at a Mississauga banquet hall. About 240 students attended the event. "That's certainly our main working hypothesis," he said.

The number of suspected food poisoning cases may rise as more students are contacted by the Halton Region Health Department.

The health department is making efforts to contact each one of the students in attendance and has spoken with 150 so far, Dr. Nosal said.

Preliminary tests have confirmed the illness is caused by the E. Coli bacteria. A definitive test in the next few days will determine if it's the same strain of E. Coli that killed seven people in Walkerton in 2000 — E. Coli 0157:H7.

Infections from this strain of E. Coli are characterized by diarrhea, which is often bloody. Other symptoms may include abdominal cramps, a fever, feeling generally unwell and fatigue. Known sources of E. Coli include under-cooked meat, contaminated produce and contaminated drinking water.

In about five to 10 per cent of these cases, a more serious problem develops called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome.

"Obviously, we hope few if any get this condition," Dr. Nosal said.

The health department is continuing to notify everyone involved as well as the public. Anyone who attended the graduation event and is ill should contact the health department and seek medical help,

**"I'm not happy. I spent \$150 (for graduation) to get sick."**

**JOSH FREDRICKS**

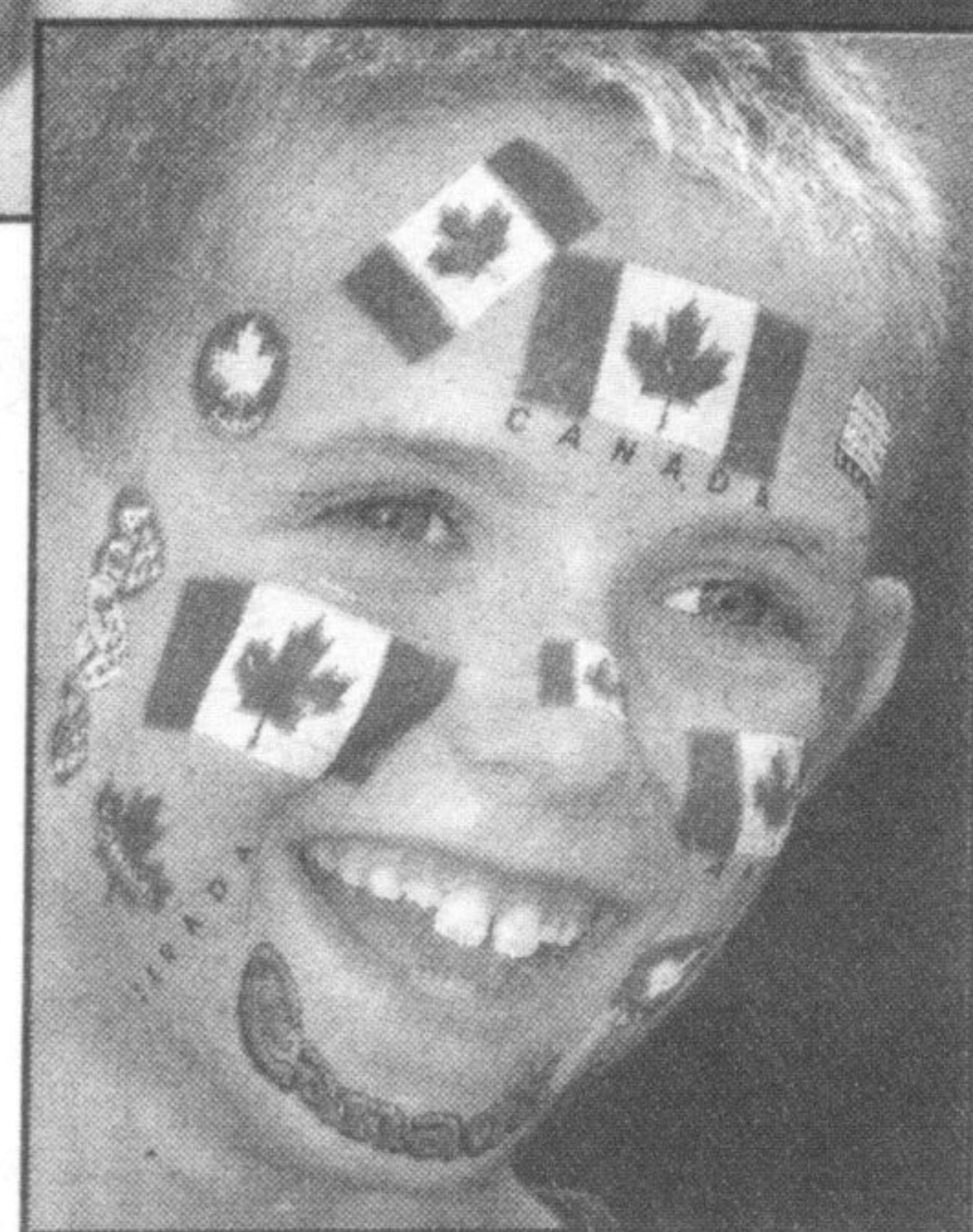
Dr. Nosal said. "E. Coli can cause serious disease in a small number of those infected. And, it can be easily transmitted by those who are ill to family members and other close contacts," he added.

Infected students should wash their hands scrupulously to prevent passing the illness on to family members, Dr. Nosal said, emphasizing the importance of preventing transmission to others in the community.

Infected students shouldn't return to work until the diarrhea has subsided and they've been feeling better for a day. Those working in food preparation, food service, or child or health care settings can't return to work until they've had two negative test results, Dr. Nosal said.

Although some students may have mild cases that last just a day or two, more serious cases can last several days.

• see **DOZENS** on page 12



## Proud Canadians

Canada turned 136 Tuesday with celebrations held from coast to coast. Among those taking part in local festivities at the Milton Fair Grounds were proud Canadians Danielle Kelly and Thomas Gibson-Gamache (inset) — both nine years old. For more Canada Day coverage, see pages 3 and 14.

Photos by **GRAHAM PAINE**

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