

ReFresh Foods eliminates its membership fees

Fee posed obstacle for some agencies

By Christina Commisso
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Healthy eating could become a little easier for low-income families in Halton.

With support from the Region, ReFresh Foods has eliminated its membership fees in hopes of attracting new members and keeping existing ones.

"We never wanted an agency to be in a position where they could use more food, but chose not to take it because of the fees," said ReFresh Executive Director Charlotte

Redekop-Young.

Member agencies were charged between \$500 and \$3,800 a year for 2,500 to 20,000 pounds of fresh and non-perishable food.

Last year, ReFresh received almost \$20,000 from the membership fees, which helped cover the cost of staff and maintenance for its warehouse and refrigerated truck.

However, some councillors on Halton's health and social services committee had concerns with a publicly-funded agency charging volunteer agencies for their service.

While the majority of ReFresh agencies found the fee affordable, about 20 per cent said it posed an obstacle.

"One of the recommendations of our annual report was to seek more members," said Redekop-Young.

"Maybe without the membership fee, we'll begin to see some agencies order more food."

The food redistribution program collects mainly surplus perishable foods and distributes them to 13 food banks and social service agencies throughout the region. In 2010, ReFresh was given \$160,000 from the Region through the Halton Regional

Community Investment Fund (HRCIF).

HRCIF 2011 funding has yet to be announced.

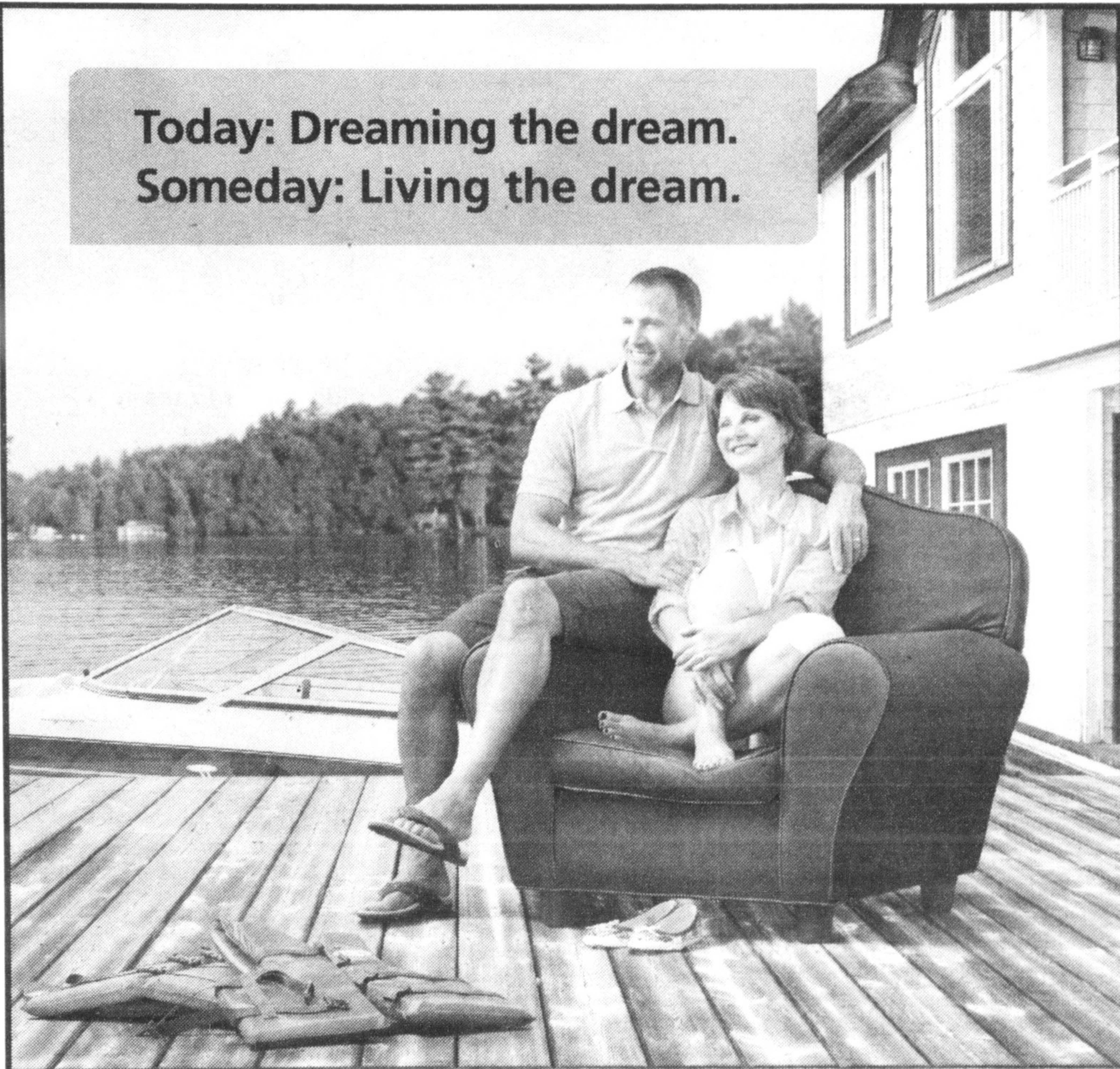
Fresh food is often in high demand at Halton food banks.

"Our clients often can't afford that type of food," said Redekop-Young.

"Some of our clients have specific health issues and fruit products are wonderful for them. Normally they wouldn't be able to afford it. Fruits and vegetables are always a challenge for us."

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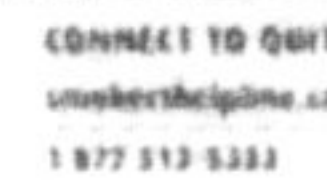
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