



**SILENT STUDENT:** Stouffville Christian School held an open house last Thursday and about 300 parents and students attended. Above, from left, Grade 4 student Joshua Lake, shows his mother Liz (centre) and teacher Nancy Stover his desk dummy. Grade 4 students made life size dummies to occupy their seats while they enjoyed the open house.

## Honey yield slowed by stifling summer heat

By BRUCE STAPLEY  
The dry spring weather experienced this year, plus the searing summer heat that slowed down the bees in their honey making efforts, will result in a smaller crop for Byer Honey this fall.

The business, which has been in the Byer name for over 100 years, will have to settle for a crop somewhere between a half and three-quarters of last year's output, according to Erle Byer, who operates the business located north of Markham on Hwy. 48, along with his uncle, Lloyd Byer.

"The drought certainly did affect the crop," he says. "When we get a dry spring, the honey plants don't develop as well."

He adds, however, that rain later on in the season helped avert an even greater drop from last year's totals. "We ended up doing a lot better than some Ontario beekeepers."

But then, Erle Byer has been in the business long enough to know that each year is an adventure unto itself. And he knows there is always someone in the business who is worse off than himself. "A lot of the producers out west were

out of business before the year even started, because of poor crops and low prices last year."

Erle reports that his 'employees', consisting of around 27 million bees, tend to slow down a little when the temperature reaches 90 degrees Fahrenheit. "On a real hot day, they tend to cluster around the hives." And this summer had its share of 90 degree days.

Another result of the heat and dryness, says Erle, is that the honey becomes darker in color. "When there is not enough clover, the bees get honey from other plants that are darker in color. Also, a smaller flow just makes for darker honey."

The darker color doesn't affect the taste, he maintains.

There is a bright side, despite the adversity. Erle reports that honey prices have risen just enough to enable him to hold his own in a business that can prove difficult to show a profit.

And he says the bees, sensing the reduced crop, stored much more honey in their brooding nests, where they spend the winter. This will mean less money spent on feeding the bees this winter.

Erle and Lloyd will continue to offer their honey for sale at the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto on Fridays and Saturdays, which usually accounts for half their annual business.

The remainder is sold directly to the public from the Hwy 48 location. All in all, Erle guesstimates total volume of this year's crop at around 30 to 40 thousand pounds. And he's optimistic for next year. "The prospects are better than we had thought they would be, he claims. "We thought there would be no sweet clover because of the drought, but the sweet clover is there for next year."

But Erle's is a guarded optimism, as he has learned through the years never to become complacent. He has come to expect the unexpected. "You never really know what you're going to end up with," he says.

In the honey business, it's not an uncommon occurrence to get stung.

# LEADBETTER'S BUTCHER SHOP

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<b>KNOCKERS</b> <b>\$279</b> <small>LB.</small>	Chicken <b>CORDON BLUE</b> <b>\$449</b> <small>LB.</small>	Noah Martin <b>SUMMER SAUSAGE</b> <b>\$399</b> <small>LB.</small>

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