

'REINDEER' SERVES UP TURKEY



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Volunteer Franses Heikens serves up the turkey dinner at the annual Christmas day luncheon at the Stouffville Country Market. Hundreds — including Santa Claus himself — attended the event founded by Norm Clements, owner of the market and the National Sports chain of stores.

MPs, hospital officials quiet on health care debate

BY SARAH PARKER
Staff Writer

Mum seems to be the word as local MPs and health administrators react to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's call for a debate on health care funding.

Frank Lussing, president of York Central Hospital, said he had no reaction to the chamber's call for an open debate in parliament, other than to say that it is a complex issue.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, including its municipal chamber and board of trade members, sent a letter to Prime Minister Chretien nearly a month ago, asking for a "results-oriented" debate on health care funding.

This would include discussing the possibility of businesses playing a larger role in the funding and rendering of health care services.

Oak Ridges MP Bryon Wilfert was the only York Region MP who could be reached for comment.

He declined to speak on the issue specifically, saying he had not yet read the

letter the chamber had sent.

But he deflected health care responsibility to the provinces where the allocation of services is decided.

However, the federal government is the head source of funding that provides money to provinces through transfer payments.

Dr. James MacLean, president of Markham Stouffville Hospital, was more open to the idea of the debate.

He's an advocate of equal health care coverage for everyone for medically necessary services.

"I believe in whatever methodology attains the best overall results for everybody," he said, neither endorsing nor dismissing the involvement of private businesses.

But MacLean does agree that an overhaul of the current health care system is needed.

It is still unknown whether Chretien has read the letter or if he will host such a debate in the House of Commons in the new year.

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