

Raw milk producer takes debate to Queen's Park

By Bill Rea

It's still illegal to sell unpasteurized milk in Ontario, but efforts are continuing to get that changed.

It looks like those efforts are not going to get a lot of support locally, however.

York-Simcoe MPP Julia Munro indicated she sees no need to change things.

"We do have a good system of protection in place," Munro commented, adding she saw no reason to change a system that's worked well for years. "It's designed to collect and process and distribute for 11 million people."

Munro agreed there is some value in raw milk. "I'm not going to dispute that," she said.

But she added the marketing and safety issues are a bigger concern.

She also agreed with the notion that people should have a choice, "but you also have to consider the

taxpayers who have to pay for the problems that arise from time to time from these issues of choice."

"You can't have it both ways," she observed.

Grey County dairy farmer Michael Schmidt took his raw milk crusade to Queen's Park last Wednesday.

That happened to be the first anniversary of a raid on his farm.

He reported that more than 20 armed officers from the ministries of natural resources, finance and health, as well as local health units, showed up. He stated they were looking for evidence that he was running a cow share program for distributing raw milk to its members.

"People can make informed choices," he told a press conference at Queen's Park.

"It's not a public health concern," he added, arguing if it were, the government

would have been more vigorous in shutting down his cow share operation.

He also said the York Region Health Unit obtained a court order to get him to stop making deliveries of raw milk to his customers in York.

Schmidt said he's facing a total of seven charges over his activities, with his trial set for May in Newmarket.

"We have not stopped," he declared.

He is still making weekly trips to Richmond Hill to deliver milk to his local clients.

"We are now at the point of civil disobedience," he said.

He estimated there are some 200,000 people in Ontario who drink raw milk, with a lot of them visiting farms to obtain it.

He also said there are 150 families in his cow share program. In total, the program has a three-year waiting list to join.

Schmidt also said there have been about three million servings of raw milk distributed in Ontario over the last 12 years.

"None of them got sick," he declared, adding most of those people might have seen improvements to their health.

He added Queen Elizabeth even drinks raw milk.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Murdock had put forth a private members resolution last year, calling on the government to study the raw milk regulations, but it was defeated.

There is still support for the move, at least in the Progressive Conservative caucus. Murdock was on hand at last week's event, still backing Schmidt's efforts, as was Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington MPP Randy Hillier.

Hillier said this issue has not yet been discussed with

the Tory caucus, but he thought that with reasonable discussion and debate, most of his colleagues might come on side.

"There is a need for the pasteurized system," he said. "This is not an attack on this system."

James McLaren, of the Natural Milk Organization, said he's been a vegetarian for about 20 years, obtaining his protein from raw milk.

Pasteurization of milk became mandatory in 1938, he observed, adding there are hygienic production practices that could be used to ensure the safety of raw milk. Politicians failed to look into those practices, he said, preferring to stick with just pasteurization.

They are asking the government to look into it now.

There's a model in place in England, allowing for wholesale and direct sale quotas, and McLaren said it's been effective. Raw milk

there is considered as safe as any other food group.

"It's really not a health issue," he remarked. "It's a political issue, and we want political action at this time."

"There are many bad laws on the books," observed raw milk consumer Judith McGill. "This is one of them. It's archaic."

King City resident Vibeke Ball, a member of the cow share, was at Queen's Park too, commenting she gets her milk every week from the program. She said she can't drink pasteurized milk.

"It's just wonderful to get such a healthy product and to know the farmer where it came from," she remarked.

Olga Ullmann, also from King City, said she's been a member for about four years. She said they were looking for better quality food, "and we found it."

"It seems to be a political issue, more than a health issue," she commented.

High school students being asked for feedback

Secondary school students in Simcoe County and across the province are being asked to voice their opinions about their school

experience. A team from the Canadian Council on Learning is evaluating some of the initiatives put in place

by the Ministry of Education that are aimed at fostering success among all secondary school students.

High school students' views are critical, given that these initiatives affect students directly.

This project will help the ministry gain a better understanding of the impact of these initiatives on student outcomes.

The findings will also be used by the ministry to inform future development of these and other initiatives.

Students have the opportunity to voice opinions about their experience in secondary school by answering an online survey.

The survey will take approximately 15 to 20

minutes to complete. The survey is completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Students and their parents are strongly encouraged to consider this request. The web address for the student survey is <http://studentsuccess.ccl-cca.ca>.

Students may obtain the appropriate user ID and

password from their secondary school.

This address can be accessed from any computer connected to the internet. The online survey will be accessible until Dec. 31.

Questions may be directed to researchers Charles Ungerleider or Julie Bélanger at cungerleider@ccl-cca.ca or jbélanger@ccl-cca.ca.

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Church Directory

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Bell Ewart Baptist	456-3334
Christ Church - St. Jude Anglican, Ivy..	458-9631
Church of God Worship Centre, Thornton	
.....	705-730-1738
Churchill United.....	456-4692
Cookstown United	458-9701
Gilford United	456-4692
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Holy Cross Ukrainian Church	705-730-7999
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Innisfil Community	436-1611
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Stroud Presbyterian	721-0134
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Warden's Gala raises \$45,000

The first annual Warden's Gala Dinner to benefit Simcoe County communities through the

United Way of Greater Simcoe County raised over \$45,000 and exceeded first year expectations.

and our community partners like the United Way fulfill a critical need in our growing communities.

dedicated community leaders," said Guergis. "They truly answered our challenge to give back to those in need in our communities. In particular, I wish to thank the Nottawasaga Inn Resort for their generous support for this event."



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The gala, held at the Nottawasaga Inn Resort in Alliston, brought together elected officials from the county, community leaders and key members of Ontario's building and land development communities. Lance Chilton of A-Channel acted as master of ceremonies for the evening, with playwright and author Dan Needles providing the keynote address.

"(The) county knows that the good works the United Way provides to many residents is invaluable and with increased growth in our county there are even greater responsibilities with an increasing demand for services," said warden Tony Guergis. "The county is moving forward with planning for our future through the development of an area wide growth plan

The county administers significant funding in the area of social services throughout our region. Currently, programs for youth, seniors, families, people with special needs and the homeless are operating at capacity level and with extensive waitlists. The United Way, a v o l u n t e e r - b a s e d organization, helps through support to local non-profit agencies. The services these agencies provide build a brighter future for children, enrich the lives of the elderly, give hope to those in need and strengthens families.

"We are extremely pleased with the support this event received from the area's corporate community and I want to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thank you to these

The United Way branch has been making a difference in the community for over 47 years by assessing local needs and distributing resources to help those most in need. Every dollar raised by United Way branch stays in the county, helping those most in need.

"We are so grateful to the county and all the event sponsors for (starting) this event and supporting the local community through United Way. These funds will be invested locally and will assist those in our community that need our collective support and assistance," said Seija Suutari, the branch's executive director.