

'Real-food advocate' visits public school board
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By: By Crystal Crimi

DURHAM -- When Pam Killeen graduated from teachers' college, she took an oath to protect children.

But, seeing what's in Ontario schools today is making her uncomfortable, Ms. Killeen told the Durham District School Board's standing committee on Oct. 1. A self-professed real-food-advocate, as well as an author on nutrition and a former teacher, Ms. Killeen shared some of her research and concerns about what kids are eating in schools today.

"This is unacceptable, I took this picture in a school recently," said Ms. Killeen, showing a picture of a slushy machine. In an interview, she said her comments were not referring to Durham schools, but what she was seeing in Ontario schools in general.

In 2005, the Ontario Medical Association stated children may not live as long as their parents, said Ms. Killeen while doing a power-point presentation. She referenced various studies and reports that pointed to saturated fats being wrongly demonized, low fat foods not creating healthy hearts or weight loss, processed foods leading to obesity, and other issues.

She said trans fat has been called the killer fat.

"And it's been called the killer fat for good reasons," said Ms. Killeen, and added they're available in schools. Even items listed as zero trans fat have it, but can get away with saying they don't if it's less than a certain amount.

Ms. Killeen spoke about sugar being worse than nicotine.

Her list continued, pointing to products in our diet causing various health problems, including aspartame.

"And we can pay now or we can pay later," she said. Excess weight and obesity could cost Ontario \$2.2 billion to \$2.5 billion a year - let's put that money in healthy food for kids instead, she said.

"To me the answers just seem so obvious. I grew up in the 1970s; I survived without these foods," she said.

Ajax Trustee Marilyn Crawford said she's proud to say her area probably has one of the healthiest high schools in the region right now - Pickering High School, because the cafeteria is closed. She added there are subs and pizza available, but no fries. She added, healthy choices start at home.

"I've had parents call me because the parents are upset they are not getting the french fries or hamburgers ...they are suggesting we have chip trucks come to the front of the school," said Trustee Crawford.

Ms. Killeen said we need to get more of the tactile foods in the school, be it through culinary programs and other things so kids can try them.

"You're preaching to the converted; I'm the most anal on this board about food," said Trustee Crawford.

Pickering Trustee Chris Braney said with his work through the Canadian Diabetes Association, he's aware of the increases in Type 1 and 2 diabetes.

"Soldier on, keep on the crusade," said Trustee Braney.