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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On May 12, 2010 Big Sisters of Sarnia-Lambton hosted its annual Chef's Challenge fundraising event held at Hiawatha Horsepark and Entertainment Centre. Hiawatha was the host of the event and did not participate in the serving or preparation of food.

On May 30, 2010 Big Sisters was made aware of guests in attendance who became ill 8-10 days after our event. Upon notification by these guests, Big Sisters contacted the Lambton Health Unit and in turn an investigation ensued. Big Sisters has worked closely with the health unit to determine the cause of this unfortunate incident. On June 2, 2010 laboratory confirmation of *Cyclospora* was determined as the cause of the symptoms guests were experiencing.

What is Cyclospora?

Cyclospora is a parasite composed of one cell, too small to be seen without a microscope. This parasite causes an intestinal infection called cyclosporiasis.

How is Cyclospora spread?

Cyclospora is spread by people ingesting something, such as food or water that was contaminated with feces (stool). Scientists think that food may become contaminated during cultivation, harvest, or packaging; in transportation through contact with infected food handlers, or through contaminated irrigation water.

Cyclospora needs time (days or weeks) after being passed in a bowel movement to become infectious for another person. Therefore, it is unlikely that *Cyclospora* is passed directly from one person to another.

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What are the symptoms of *Cyclospora* infection?

The time between becoming infected and becoming sick is usually about 1 week. *Cyclospora* infects the small intestine (bowel) and usually causes watery diarrhea, with frequent, sometimes explosive, bowel movements.

Other common symptoms include loss of appetite, weight loss, stomach cramps/pain, bloating, increased gas, nausea, and fatigue. Vomiting, body aches, headache, fever, and other flu-like symptoms may be noted. Some people who are infected with *Cyclospora* do not have any symptoms. If not treated, the illness may last from a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may seem to go away and then return once or several times (relapse). It's common to feel very tired.

Members of the public who became ill after attending Chef's Challenge are advised to:

- Report the illness to the Community Health Services Department at 519 383-8331 ext. 3575 or toll free 1-800-667-1839 ext. 3575.
- Contact their health care provider

Big Sisters will continue to work closely with the Health Unit to determine the exact cause of the *Cyclospora*. When this determination is made, details will be immediately provided to the community.