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Maple Leaf lawsuits mount as CEO promises a fix

Two new lawsuits, including a \$100-million national class-action lawsuit, have been launched against Maple Leaf Foods on behalf of consumers who bought ready-to-eat meats on the recall list.

Cezanne Bilodeau, of Ottawa, is the named representative plaintiff on the new nation-wide lawsuit being filed in Toronto Wednesday.

"Cezanne and her son purchased and consumed four different cold meat products on the recall list and they have been experiencing symptoms of cramps and nausea for approximately the last four or five days," said lawyer Ted Charney of Toronto-based firm Falconer Charney LLP, which is launching the suit jointly with Sutts Strosberg LLP. "And they have gone to the doctor and had blood tests done."

Bilodeau could not immediately be reached for comment and the statement of claim was not immediately available

None of these allegations has been proven in court



THE CANADIAN PRESS/ Toronto Star - Tara Walton
President and CEO of Maple Leaf Foods Michael McCain.

Maple Leaf Foods president Michael McCain said today the company was responsible for the recall and taking all the necessary steps to fix the problem and prevent it from happening again.

"I absolutely do not believe this is a failure of the Canadian food safety system or the regulators," he said at a news conference in Toronto on Wednesday afternoon. "Certainly knowing there is a desire to assign blame, I want to reiterate that the buck stops here."

"We have an unwavering commitment to keep our food safe, and we have excellent systems and processes in place but this week it's our efforts that failed not the regulators or Canadian food safety system."

A Toronto woman was also named plaintiff in a separate lawsuit launched by Stevensons LLP.

Adrienne Adie, 66, became seriously ill twice in July after eating Schneiders All Beef Bologna, a product not on the list of items recalled by Maple Leaf. She has not yet been tested for listeriosis.

"Her concern is listeriosis, but of course things have yet to be established," said Brian Kirkland, which Stevensons LLP.

In a release, Stevensons said they wrote to Maple Leaf requesting that the companies carefully review the list of affected products and the distribution establishments, which are to be decontaminated.

"Ms. Adie has been to the hospital in an ambulance once already. Others have died. This is a public health crisis. Maple Leaf Foods needs to expand their testing and decontamination efforts to satisfy the public that the problem has been contained."

<http://www.thespec.com/printArticle/425822>

10/5/2009

Charney said his firm's website has received more than 10,000 hits after posting information about the lawsuit.

"People from across the country have completed applications indicating that they are experiencing similar symptoms from consuming products on the recall list," he said.

"Others are very concerned because they and their families have consumed the products, and they don't know if they are going to develop symptoms," Charney said.

Charney said he hopes to join this lawsuit together with the four separate lawsuits filed Monday and Tuesday by Merchant Law Group, but it is too early to tell whether that would happen.

Darren Williams, a lawyer based in the Vancouver office of Merchant Law, said Wednesday the firm had not yet decided whether to join them all together.