

## Cara's Trifling Truffles

My dear friend Cara, as in CARA Operations Ltd., residing in Vaughan, Ontario, owner or operator or franchisor of a variety of food and beverage chains, including Beer Markt, Casey's, East Side Mario's, Harvey's, Kelsey's, Milestone's, Montana's, Prime Pubs, Swiss Chalet, and other fine establishments appears to be doing some false advertising.

Can you really fault her?

For example, one of her many daughters, named [Swiss Chalet](#), is celebrating the Christmas season with "Festive Specials" – that include a small box containing five "Truffles" for \$12.99 (add \$1.75 for white meat), see Figure 1.



Figure 1: Swiss Chalet's ad, screen shot from [www.swisschalet.com](http://www.swisschalet.com).

Now, what could be more benevolent than providing a low cost nourishing meal of (ever shrinking?) chicken to the poor and down-trodden folks normally standing in line at a charity's soup kitchen?

## CARA's Benevolence

Please don't get me wrong. Nothing against [Sally Ann's](#) and other charitable organisations' soup kitchens. In fact, I support them regularly.

But dear Cara's benevolence appears to beat them all. You even get a gilded box of (what she claims to be) "Lindor Chocolate truffles" with her "Festive Special." Nothing but the finest Assorted Lindor (imported by [Lindt and Sprüngli \(Canada\) Inc.](#); hereinafter "Lindt") for its patrons and, of course, the "Festive Special" comes with a much higher price than the regular fare of the same kind. Surely, the truffles deserve a bit of a markup. After all, they have been imported from Switzerland.

There is, however, a not so small problem with Cara's benevolence; her truffles really taste more like caramel candies, covered with a microlayer of chocolate veneer but wrapped in most colorful wrapping. Perhaps, Cara thinks that they are a true gift to your taste buds, provided your (true or false) teeth can withstand the attack by the caramel type filling; if not, tough luck.

As you can see, dear Cara's "truffles," which I deem to be close to small-caliber cannon projectiles, really are not what chocolatiers normally sell as truffles. In fact, contrary to what the (anonymous) "Swiss Chalet Guest Services" responder stated in reply to my inquiry, the Lindt co. product package coming with Swiss Chalet's (SC's) "Festive Special" DOES NOT contain the word "truffle" at all.

Obviously, Lindt does not wish to be accused of false advertising but SC has no qualms in that regard and calls them truffles anyway. A case of mistaken identity or false benevolence?

Products of fine chocolates from established chocolatiers in this and/or other Provinces of Canada are called [Gianduja \(an Italian term\) chocolates](#); some of those products may even deserve to be termed truffles but certainly not the caramel-type candies advertised as such by SC. Perhaps, dear Cara may be persuaded to provide some true benevolence instead.

### True Benevolence

Let's begin by looking at my "Dear's" website. There it says in bold lettering "Cara is truly a Canadian icon," see Figure 2:



Figure 2: Cara's claim.

The company's headquarter in Vaughan certainly looks impressive too, see Figure 3:



Figure 3: Cara's headquarters.

Figures 2 & 3 are screen shots taken from pages at <http://cara.investorroom.com> .

Cara sure looks like (or wants to create the impression that) it is doing just fine, thank you, at the ripe old age of 125 years. Though being a "privately held company," (see Figure 2), the company's shares trade on stock exchanges, including the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSE). The latest [annual report shows net earnings in 2015](#) of approximately \$100 million or \$2.00 per share and has paid out total dividends to shareholders of about \$0.45 in 2016. It also states "Principal Shareholders hold 70.0% of the total issued and outstanding shares and have 98.3% of the voting control attached to all the shares." For more details on Cara's empire and the family that controls it, see <http://www.canadianbusiness.com/tag/phelan-family/> . The latest (unaudited) [quarterly statement](#),

published 9 Nov. 2016, says "As at September 25, 2016, CARA had 1,127 restaurants, 1,080 of which were located in Canada and the remaining 47 locations were located internationally."

Clearly, Cara's operations are reaching far and wide.

Please forgive me, I'm still trying to dislodge the caramel ... Can't afford dental care for lack of insurance? The first question you'll be asked upon visiting a dentist's office: Do you have insurance? Depending on your answer, the treatment options may vary. ... Why do you still have any teeth left anyway?

... Now, where was I going?

### **Oh yeah, True Benevolence**

Wouldn't it be nice if my dear Cara were actually going to do something wonderful for the destitute people as a truly "Festive Special Dividend?" **Like, for example, handing out free vouchers for a decent meal to the thousands of destitute and homeless people in the country that are unable to afford Cara's trifling truffles? And instead of "truffles," why not add free vouchers for basic dental care. A couple of million dollars so spent might just lift the recipients' festive spirits.**

Sally and her friends would probably love to help out Cara with the vouchers' distribution.