

Explosion at Holly Industries was sulphur-fuelled— Fire Marshal

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM) has released the results of its investigation into the Holly Industries's explosion and fire last November.

The OFM looked at two potential causes— a natural gas leak or a sulphur-fuelled explosion, said Deputy Fire Chief Harry Olivieri in a presentation to Halton Hills council last Monday.

The item was presented in a public forum of a council meeting to provide clarity to the public on the issue, because "we thought it was such a significant item," said Councillor Bryan Lewis, a member of the Town's Fire Services committee.

Olivieri said the OFM report stated the

pipes leaking natural gas on the roof were not very large, and the burn patterns did not suggest this as a credible fuel source.

On the other hand, despite safeguards to prevent dust explosions, based on test result analyses, sulphur was isolated as the fuel for the explosion. Ignition sources could have been machinery/appliances, static electricity or open flame (there was evidence of cigarette smoking in the building).

The conclusion was the fire was accidental, caused by a sulphur-fuelled explosion/fire. Fire patterns indicated a floor-level explosion occurred which caused the walls to bulge, the roof to lift off and set back down and debris to be thrown short distances. There were no injuries reported.

But the event caused extensive damage

to the building, shutting down operations and ultimately six workers lost their jobs.

Holly Industries's parent company, Georgia Gulf Sulfur Corporation, moved its operation back to its home base in Georgia, has demolished the sulphur processing plant, and put the 59 Eastern Ave. property on the real estate market at a price of \$895,000.

Pointing out that it was the third incident in nine years, Acton Councillor Michael O'Leary said the Town's Economic Development staff tried to find safer locations for the business that was not near residential areas. As well, both the Fire Department and OFM tried to provide advice to the company to aid its re-opening.

Wards 1&2 Regional Councillor Clark

Somerville said Town Planning and Infrastructure Services staff also tried to work with the company, "but to no avail."

Mayor Rick Bonnette said the OFM report is "bitter redemption" for the Town. He made no apologies for the hard line he took with the firm's ownership.

"When you have three explosions in a residential area in... nine years, you have to ask some hard questions," he said.

The mayor was sorry the local long-term employees lost their jobs.

"Now it's interesting that the property is up for sale and they want to put residential units on it," he said. "At the end of the day... They'll probably get more money and they're probably smiling down south. ... They were no angels."

Chong pleased

Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong congratulated the Federal Redistribution Commission for Ontario for listening to local residents and leaving the local riding unchanged.

"These individual citizens who provided their input are to be thanked for assisting the Commission with its work," Chong said.

Policy to change

Pan Am Games CEO **Ian Troop**, of Georgetown, says changes will be made to the Games' expense policy after it was revealed highly-paid executives were filing claims for items like tea and parking, angering Premier Kathleen Wynne and Toronto Mayor Rob Ford.



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More work for MPP

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott has been named the new Progressive Conservative critic to the Minister of Research and Innovation.

This new role comes in addition to his current job as the PC critic to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Charges coming

The Oakville & Milton Humane Society says it hopes to lay charges very soon in the recent case involving more than 100 cats rescued from a Steeles Ave. home in Halton Hills.

On Sept. 5, the OMHS visited the home after receiving an anonymous tip and began transferring 115 cats to its shelter— 10 dead cats were also removed.

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