

Shoppers on move, BBIA still confident

Steel June 9/04 p.4

• Story continued from page 1.

Konviser said Shoppers' move should be viewed as "positive news" because local tradespeople will be hired to build the new store and the larger operation will employ many more people.

"There will be new employment opportunities at a larger store ... the owner of the store will decide what his or her needs are in terms of the number of employees," he said.

Konviser said Shoppers doesn't own, but leases its store properties. All Shoppers stores are owned and operated by local pharmacists "and this new store in Belleville will be as well."

Tamara Bournival owns both the downtown and Quinte Mall Shoppers locations.

"While I support the corporate decision to relocate, we are still very sorry to be leaving the downtown," she said. "We will strive to provide the same high level of service to our loyal customers but from a new location."

Bournival has owned the downtown Shoppers store since 1997. That location was formerly McCoy's Drug Store and Top Drug Mart before becoming Shoppers in the early 1980s.

The pharmacist-owner sold the downtown store in January of 2000 and moved to Gananoque to take over another Shoppers franchise there. She returned to Belleville in July of 2001 and reacquired the downtown store as well as the Quinte Mall location.

Bournival said staff will be moving to the new location and the business will continue to operate as usual.

"Certainly, the new location will give us the ability to provide all the products our customers demand in a bright new store. We have an excellent delivery service and we may see an increase in its usage," she said.

BBIA chairman Dinkel said even though he hasn't been told "officially" about Shoppers' decision to close the downtown store, work is under way to find a replacement.

"Our association has spoken to another drug store which is considering coming into The Village and that's what we can hope

for ... I'm very confident that another drug store will come into The Village," he said.

Dinkel said downtown needs at least one drug store because of the foot traffic as well as the large number of people who work and live downtown.

Geen's Pharmacy — now Pharmasave — also operated on Front Street for many years. It consolidated its downtown operation a few years ago with its location on Sidney Street.

Dinkel said he understands Shoppers' move to a larger store "is a sign of the times. To me, it's a head office decision to close this downtown store and relocate it to a big box location on Dundas Street.

"I am very confident that the void will be filled by another drug store in due time."

Belleville Coun. Egerton Boyce said he shares Dinkel's optimism.

"I'm sure the BBIA will do all it can to convince another drug store to come downtown. There are a lot of people who rely on Shoppers and I hope another one will take its place," he said.

Boyce, city council's representative on the BBIA, said he shares the sentiment of all councillors in hoping another drug store takes the place of Shoppers.

"My concern certainly is not having a drug store downtown for the many seniors who live downtown and other members of the community who live near downtown and certainly use it. But I don't think council can make a drug store appear."

John Watson, president of Seniors in Action at the Quinte Living Centre, said even though residents can use Shopper delivery service, the downtown drug store was a destination spot for many of them.

"They still like to go with dollar in hand and shop. It's the old fashioned way," he said.

Watson said when Geen's left downtown, "it was a half disaster. And now it's the other half. Our residents hope that another drug store does come into the downtown.

"Downtown needs a drug store."