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AUTO INDUSTRY: GM dropping dealerships

Local GM dealers on the bubble

NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

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NORTHUMBERLAND — You hear — or you don't. That's the bubble GM dealerships were on Wednesday afternoon. By 3:30 p.m. May 20, west Northumberland County dealerships had received no word on whether they would be dropped from the GM Canada roster.

GM Canada said Wednesday it will cut the number of its 705 GM dealerships in Canada by approximately 42% — or 300 agencies.

“We're braced for whatever happens.”

Bill Spencer of Bill Spencer Chevrolet in Cobourg

“I really don't know. Nobody's phoned to tell me they've heard. We haven't heard anything,” Bill Campbell of Thomas Pontiac Buick GMC Ltd. on University Avenue West in Cobourg said. The Thomas dealership has

won the prestigious award for being in the top 100 Canadian dealerships 10 different years.

“We're hoping,” Campbell said of the no news is good news approach. “We've always done what GM has asked us to do. We're pretty confident.”

In Port Hope, just after 3:15 p.m. Wednesday, Bud Lauria of Lauria Pontiac Buick GMC Limited said, “There's nothing I have right now.

“My only knowledge right now is that it's been delayed a bit,” Lauria said of the notification process.

By 4:15 yesterday afternoon, Dana Johnston of Johnston Chevrolet (Sales, Service, Leasing) in Colborne and Brighton had heard nothing.

The GM Canada announcement said the company would be informing the dealerships to be cut that their sales and service contracts will not be renewed in October 2010. The Canadian dealerships employ an estimated 11,200 people. If dealerships opt to close entirely, they, in turn, could be responsible for employee severances, leases

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GM

Local dealers await their fate

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and other wind-down costs.

GM Canada has not disclosed what, if any, compensation will be offered to closing dealerships.

The cuts are required for GM to qualify for long-term government financial aid.

“We're braced for whatever happens,” Bill Spencer of Bill Spencer Chevrolet on County Road 2 in Cobourg said at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday afternoon.

He had yet to hear anything from GM Canada.

“That's just the way it is,” Spencer said.

So, too, at Quantrill Chevrolet Cadillac Ltd. in Port Hope,

no word had been heard.

“We have had no notification yet,” Lisa Reed of Quantrill reported at 3:25 p.m. “We will see.”

The GM Canada statement issued Wednesday said, “Due to the unique aspects of our Canadian dealer network, we have focused our network rationalization efforts on key urban markets in an effort to achieve a viable network configuration all across Canada.

“The end result in Canada will be a more competitive dealer network with higher volumes, while continuing to maintain the strongest and broadest dealer network in the country better equipped to serve GM customers.”

colbornebriefs

TIM HORTONS SITE PLAN APPROVED

COLBORNE — It looks like a Tim Hortons for Colborne is a go. Cramahe Township council voted unanimously on June 16 to approve the site plan for the new restaurant and drive-through to be located on Big Apple Drive.

The township now needs the provincial Ministry of Transport to sign off on a traffic study and a storm water management plan, then it's a go.

Tim Hortons hopes to be in operation by Christmas 2009.

CRAMAHE APPLIES FOR INDUSTRIAL PARK FUNDING

COLBORNE — Cramahe Township will apply for \$605,096.23 for upgrades to its industrial park located on Purdy Road. If the grant is approved, the money will come from the federal government's Community Adjustment Fund announced June 1.

Upgrades include street lighting, road surface improvements, a drainage study, signage and landscaping.

“Unlike most grants, this one does not require a municipal contribution. But, the township is contributing \$345,000 to the project because some of the work was already budgeted. Community development official Rebecca Goddard-Sarria told council at its June 16 meeting that a township contribution would enhance the chances

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of the application.

APPLE ROUTE NEEDS REVAMPING, CHAMBER SAYS

COLBORNE — Brighton and District Chamber of Commerce president Mary Robertson was at Cramahe Township council June 16 to update the township on her group's activities and plans.

The chamber's strategic plan for 2009-10 includes reaching out to existing members of the chamber, growing its membership, promoting businesses and services and increasing the member-to-member discount program.

She spoke briefly about enhancing the Apple Route which is now under the chamber's jurisdiction.

“It needs revamping and revitalization,” Robertson says.

She is very enthusiastic about the prospects for culinary tourism and thinks it will bring significant benefits to Cramahe and the Municipality of Brighton. All the chambers of commerce in Northumberland County are working collectively on the concept, she reported.

Culinary tourism falls under one of the chamber's core competencies.

The Brighton and District Chamber of Commerce website is attracting over 38,000 visitors a year. Brighton Online had over 72,000 in its last 12 month period and the Apple Route tourism site had 78,000 visitors.

Robertson was concerned about

the 22% drop in Cramahe Township members in the chamber but added that 60% of the decline was the result of businesses ceasing to operate.

There is currently no Cramahe member of the chamber's governing board.

Mayor Marc Coombs offered to try to find someone to fill the role.

CRAMAHE TO SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

CRAMAHE TOWNSHIP — Cramahe Township will continue to support the Northumberland Transportation Initiative (NTI) and will host the NTI funds it receives from a requested gas tax rebate.

Council voted to accept the NTI's request for a letter of resolution to the provincial Ministry of Transport (MTO). If a similar letter is received from Alnwick/Haldimand Township by June 30, the NTI will be eligible to receive \$3,000 in gas tax money from the province.

The actual rebate is based on the amount paid into the project by the municipalities and the population being served. Cramahe Township contributed \$7,000 in this year's budget to the program which picks up riders in Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand and takes them to other locations between Cramahe and Cobourg.

NTI is planning to purchase a wheelchair-accessible van to meet with MTO requirements

— Bob Owen