

Union vote Dec. 15

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Northumberland Today

COLBORNE - Township of Cramahe firefighters will decide in a secret vote this week whether they wish to be represented by a union.

A Union Application for Certification has been issued to Cramahe Township by the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU).

"A number of the firefighters have contacted us, and asked to be represented by the union," Derik McArthur, Canadian director for the union, said.

An application was submitted to the Ontario Labour Relations Board which, in turn, notified the Township on Friday, Dec. 10 of a vote which will take place among the "on-call" firefighters.

All members from both the Castleton and Colborne fire halls are eligible to vote.

"All firefighters, regardless of whether they signed a

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Cramahe firefighters take certification vote Wednesday

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union authorization card or not, will be given the opportunity to cast a ballot," McArthur

said.

"If a majority of those people vote in favour of a union, the union is certified and we'd begin electing committees."

The Labour Relations Board normally holds the secret ballot vote within seven days of the application being filed.

The vote is anticipated for Wednesday, Dec. 15.

"They're employees just like anybody else," McArthur said of the Castleton and Colborne firefighters.

"They just happen to work part-time and have the right to representation. Fire burns a career guy the same way it burns a paid on-call guy."

A memorandum about the application was posted in the Castleton and Colborne fire-halls by Fire Chief Jim Harris on Dec. 9.

In the memo, obtained by *Northumberland Today*, Harris encourages all members to vote and emphasized the Township of Cramahe "will fully honour and comply with the law."

"Further, the Township respects that each firefighter has the freedom to join or not

to join a trade union," the memo continues.

"If only three people show up to vote and two of them vote for the union, all of the volunteer firefighters will be unionized."

"Those two will be deciding the fate of everyone else."

Harris points out a number of factors for the firefighters to consider in their vote, saying that joining a union isn't something to just "try."

"Getting into a union is easy, but getting out is very tough," he states.

"A union cannot guarantee job security, hours of work, wages, or anything, any more than the Township of Cramahe can guarantee these items. The only thing a union can guarantee is that you will have to pay them dues."

Harris goes on to state that if the union is successful, all working conditions will be on the table "when we go to hammer out a first collective agreement."

"There is no guarantee that the Township will agree to any 'changes' to what you have now, just because there is a union," he states in the memo.

"We want to retain our ability to deal directly with all of our firefighters and would prefer to not deal through a union."

"I urge you to give the matter of unionization your most careful consideration and trust you will make an informed decision about your future."

McArthur added, "it's nothing to do with money and this is no exception. (It's about) respect and treating people fairly."

When contacted, Cramahe Township chief administrative officer Christie Alexander stated in an e-mail, "since it is currently before the Ontario Labour Relations Board, it would be inappropriate for me to comment."

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RYBACK, Chester "Chet" (Mietchyslaw)

Peacefully at the Golden Plough Lodge, Cobourg on Saturday, December 11, 2010, Chester Ryback aged 88 years. Beloved husband of Mary (nee Evans) and the late Phyllis (nee West). Loving father of Dianne (Michael), Mary (Jim), Philip (Denise), Vanessa (David) and Elizabeth. Cherished grandfather of Jasmine, Amelia, Meredith, Emma, Katy, Zachary, Andreas, Maeve and Owain. Great grandfather of Willem. Chet will be missed by his son-in-law John, nephew Teddy and close friends. Following cremation a Memorial Service will be held at Trinity Anglican Church Colborne, on Sunday, January 2, 2011 at 2 pm. Memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society or Canadian Cancer Society. Condolences received at www.MacCoubrey.com.

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