

Curwood employees to discuss options

The union representing the plant employees at Curwood Packaging Ltd., who will lose their jobs when the Georgetown business closes next month, is hosting an information meeting for both union and non-union employees Saturday morning.

In all, 137 employees will be out of work by the time the Armstrong Ave. plant closes on March 22. The plant's parent company announced the closure late last month "based on the company's desire to consolidate production capacity."

The meeting will be held at Mold-Masters SportsPlex at 9 a.m. and will provide the employees' information on closure packages, the adjustment process and Employment Insurance requirements.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette and a representative from Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong's office will be at the meeting.

A media release issued Wednesday by the Communication Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) Local 591G said the company has "left its long-standing employees hanging."

The release stated the union had met with company officials earlier in the week to attempt to negotiate a reasonable closure package for the employees.

"After talks broke off at the end of the day, we were no further ahead than we were at the beginning," said shop steward Bob McCandless.

CEP Graphical Director Duncan Brown said while the Ontario Employment Standards Act requires employers give laid off employees one week's pay for each year of service to a maximum of 26 weeks, "most companies offer far more than the minimum."

He said with other companies, the union has been successful in removing the 26-week ceiling, and also obtained retraining allowances along with pension and ben-

efit extensions. That has not been the case with Curwood.

Local president Norm Beattie said Bonnette has offered assistance in the adjustment process for the displaced workers, but he said the company isn't likely to participate so it will be left to the government, Town of Halton Hills and Union to provide training for the employees.

"We must all work together in the task to achieve full re-employment for all employees," said Beattie. "The quick response and honest commitment by the mayor's office and both levels of government will certainly let those know that they are not alone. The employees helped Curwood reach the multi-billion dollar level, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect."

At press time a call to Curwood spokesperson Melanie Miller from *The Independent & Free Press* had not been returned.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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