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# The Independent

## Weekend Edition & Free Press



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Curwood Packaging Ltd. employees were invited to attend an information meeting at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex Saturday where union officials met with about 100 employees. Among those in attendance were, from left, Fred

Hilts, Gord Rozell and Randy Perkins. Hilts and Rozell worked for the firm for 17 years while Perkins was an 18-year employee. The company's surprise closure will put 137 people out of work— 62 today. Photos by Sabrina Byrnes

## Curwood workers try to pick up the pieces 'We just have to move on'

Being out of work with no job prospects on the horizon is not what Randy Perkins thought he would be facing at this stage in his life, but that's exactly the predicament he finds himself in today.

"I'm 53, I don't know what I'm going to do," says Perkins, one of the 62 plant employees at Curwood Packaging Ltd. who will finish their last day at the company today (Friday).

In all, by the time the Georgetown plant closes after 37 years in business on March 22, 137 people, some with more than 30 years at the company, will be unemployed.

Perkins, an 18-year Curwood employ-

ee who works as a packer, says the executive from the company's U.S. head office who broke the news the plant was closing to shocked employees late last month, spoke no more than a dozen words, then left the room.

"Everybody was stunned," he says. "I left, I went straight home."

He can't believe the way employees have been tossed aside.

"It's like someone slapping you in the face and wanting to borrow money off you five minutes later," says the longtime Georgetown resident.

But Perkins has come to terms with his situation.

"I'm a survivor. I'm a realist. I know it's

over. We just have to move on," he says.

Even though he doesn't drive and is limited to finding work in town, Perkins, who is single with no kids, says his situation is not as bad as it is for some of his co-workers who have big mortgages and big families.

For the first time in his life he's put together a resume (the company provided a consultant to show the displaced workers how), and he's mapping out his job search.

"Word of mouth is probably better than the employment centre. I'm pretty well open to anything," says Perkins.

Gord Rozell, another longtime Curwood employee, is carefully consid-

ering his work options and is thinking about going back to school to train for a different career.

Coping with the plant closure has been difficult, says the printer who has worked at Curwood for 17 years.

"I was shocked. I didn't see it coming," says Rozell, 44, who just recently married and has two children from a previous marriage. "It's almost like a mourning process."

But he's trying to remain positive.

"It's just a setback. I have a good wife behind me," says Rozell, a Wasaga Beach resident, who will also put in his last day at the company today.

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