

OPSEU members protest private liquor 'agency stores'

By **Melanie Hennessey**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Unionized LCBO workers protesting what they call "back door privatization" of its stores stopped by the Milton branch last week to let residents know about their plight.

In town for three hours Friday afternoon, a trio of LCBO staff handed out leaflets that say the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), liquor board employees division is calling for an immediate freeze on the expansion of privately-run liquor outlets known as agency stores.

"These stores are not run by LCBO employees," explained Marie Nunziata, OPSEU local 288 president. "They can be 'mom and pop' stores, and they make a 10 per cent profit (on liquor sales). That becomes a conflict of interest for them."

She said that since those running agency stores are per-

sonally profiting from selling liquor, they're less likely to challenge an under-age or intoxicated customer.

But Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh argued that isn't the case. "They (agency stores) have a track record of responsible retailing," he said.

He noted the agency stores are checked to make sure they're not selling to people they shouldn't be. And he said if they were caught, they'd be fined and their licence would be taken away.

"It would take away a lot of their income," he said. "Would they risk that? I don't think so."

Nunziata noted that LCBO staff is trained to deal with customers who are minors or intoxicated, and at the Milton location, up to 400 or 500 customers could be refused each month.

According to OPSEU, there are now close to 200 agency

stores hosted by grocery stores, gas stations and other businesses throughout Ontario, and Premier Dalton McGuinty has announced 20 more will open soon.

While the agency stores started out as a way to service small rural areas, Nunziata pointed out that they're coming very close to urban centres now.

For example, she said there's an agency store in Campbellville that's located just a short drive away from the Milton LCBO at the corner of Bronte and Main streets.

"It's shocking that they do have these types of stores when they're supposed to be in remote areas," she said.

Chudleigh contended that for a person who has to keep driving from Campbellville to Milton to the LCBO, it might not seem so close.

"It's a 15-minute drive. It's long enough," he said.

Overall, Chudleigh said he feels the agency store program is a good one, and unless agency locations start setting up in areas where a regular LCBO could be supported, he doesn't think they provide a 'back door' for privatization.

Union members are asking everyone to support their campaign by writing to McGuinty, who can be reached at dalton.mcguinty@premier.gov.on.ca and LCBO acting chair and CEO Philip J. Olsson at philip.olsson@lcb.com.

The union is also getting people to sign postcards it had made that call on McGuinty to freeze all new agency stores and launch a full public review of the program. The postcards will be delivered to the premier in April.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at mhennessey@milton-canadianchampion.com.

+ MILTON TOYOTA +

YEAR-END

+ CLEARANCE +

IS ON NOW!

MILTON TOYOTA

400 STEELES AVENUE, MILTON

Toll Free: 1-800-617-4025 • Fax: (905) 875-1516
info@miltontoyota.com
MyTOYOTAPLACE.COM

CAN YOU GIVE SOMEONE A LIFT?

Red Cross drivers help those in need get to medical appointments, adult day programs and other activities.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED

CALL US TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP.

(905) 875-1459

+ Canadian Red Cross

SCOTT'S

Car Care & Rust Check Centre

- Automotive Detailing
- Window Tinting
- Accessories

Get Ready For Winter And Rust Proof Your Vehicle!

\$10⁰⁰ OFF

Any Rust Check Service.
*Ad must be present at time of service. Offer expires December 31, 2006.

410 Industrial Drive, Milton
905-875-3367