

# THE RICHMOND HILL Liberal

A Metrospan Community Newspaper

Wednesday, Sept. 19, 1979

25 Cents

30 pages

## Nursing home residents evacuated when barn fire threatens building

More than 100 people escaped injury last Wednesday when a fire broke out in a barn at a Richmond Hill nursing home. Six horses perished in the blaze.

Seventy-five residents of one area of the Country Place Nursing Home on Elgin Mills Road were evacuated to another section of the home, because the fire was too close for comfort.

Richmond Hill Fire Department received the alarm at about 6 a.m. and responded with all its men and equipment, but because that area of the community is not serviced by town water, Markham and Aurora Fire Departments were asked to send tanker trucks to supply water.

In all 10 vehicles and 50 men battled the blaze, that came within 20 feet of the nursing home. A water blanket had to be established to protect the residence.

The barn, which is one of the nursing home property, has been rented. Two sports cars were destroyed in the blaze.

Damages are estimated at \$75,000 and the cause is believed to be spontaneous combustion.

Amazingly no one was injured, but it did make a different beginning to the day for the residents of the nursing home.

One elderly man, who was being pushed to safety in a wheelchair, insisted on staying to watch the barn burn.

"I used to be a fire fighter," he said, "and I want to see this."

Firefighters agreed and set the man in a safe but advantageous location.

Ambulances were standing by in case they were needed for evacuation of the senior citizens, but their services were not required.



Six horses died at a nursing home was threatened in this spectacular barn fire last week on Elgin Mills Road east of Bayview Avenue. Three fire departments responded to the call. In the bottom photo, Gordon Monroe watches helplessly

as flames destroy his two sports cars. Richmond Hill fire officials are still investigating the cause of the blaze. (Liberal photos by Bruce Hogg)

## Staff Ridges fire hall - Corcoran

The victim of a recent fire in Oak Ridges and the council member representing the area, feel it's time to have the Oak Ridges fire hall manned during the day.

Last Tuesday afternoon fire gutted the home of Thomas Biso on Vanex Park near Bayview Avenue in Oak Ridges.

Councillor Bill Corcoran said he felt the firefighters did a good job, but it just took too long to come through the traffic.

Mr. Biso, the owner of the home, Mary Harris of Jefferson Sideroad who was on the scene when fire broke out, and Councillor Corcoran, all said they felt it took about 15 minutes for the fire trucks to arrive.

Richmond Hill Fire Chief Bob Kennedy, said fire department records prove the time from the alarm being called in to the arrival of three trucks on the scene was actually eight minutes.

The Oak Ridges Fire Station at King Sideroad and Yonge Street was built in 1975 as a volunteer fire station without facilities for full-time firefighters.

Fire Chief Kennedy said he has difficulty getting volunteers in the area and is always looking for someone who lives or works in the area who would be free to attend fire calls.

Mr. Biso said he had only praise for the Richmond Hill firefighters, but he said he would like to see the firehall in Oak Ridges staffed.

"It would have been a lot better," he said, referring to the fire which destroyed his home.

"I think it's time we had a couple of permanent firemen," said Councillor Corcoran, "at least during the day."

Chief Kennedy said when the station was built it was felt if the population increased there would be a need for a full time facility, but at this time judging by the number of calls they receive it is not warranted.

## Task forces formed

### Energy project gains momentum

What are you doing about energy?

There's a new group in town and its members want to find out.

Richmond Hill was one of three Canadian municipalities selected for a unique energy conservation demonstration project, and this week, the group's activities are shifting into high gear.

The project is aimed at showing how a community can work together to meet energy conservation goals.

The 15-person steering committee, led by Mayor David Schiller, has been formed to provide policy direction and leadership for the project.

The 15 members come from a broad cross-section of Richmond Hill.

To get things going, the com-

mittee plans to set up task groups in a number of areas which are of key interest to the community.

These groups will work as study groups, and develop specific recommendations about how to implement energy conservation measures in the various sectors.

Membership on these groups is open to anyone interested, and Richmond Hill citizens are encouraged to become involved, said Catherine Hunt, who is overseeing the project as a member of the consulting firm of L.J. D'Amore and Associates Ltd.

Sponsoring the project are the federal departments of Consumer and Corporate Affairs; Energy Mines and Resources; and Supply and Services.

The Ontario Ministry of Energy will also be involved in monitoring the project.

About 100 citizens of Richmond Hill became involved earlier this month when they were asked to participate in a consumer survey regarding energy.

They'll be contacted a year from now and results will be compared with the first survey.

At a press conference Monday morning, Mayor Schiller and five members of the committee fielded questions.

"We must convince the public the energy problem is real and is going to get worse," the mayor said.

"There is much information available to the public if they

want to use it," he said. Some committee members will meet this morning to nail down the project's goals.

Anyone seeking further information on the subject should call Ms. Hunt at 884-8101, extension 46.

## Region stays out of Maple dispute

York Regional Council was advised by its solicitor Thursday to stay out of a dispute between contractors for the new Maple theme park and Canada's Wonderland — owners of the project.

Director of Finance and Administration John McCormack asked councillors to support his company in a bid to have contracts go to only union firms.

Union workers went on strike last week over a decision to allow non-union men to get a contract on one of the construction sites.

The company applied for an injunction and as of Monday, it appeared roadwork and grading were nearly back to normal.

"Our desire was to use Canadian Union Labor," said Mr. McCormack. "Construction was progressing quickly and until last week, there were no problems."

He explained the provincial government awarded a contract to a firm which is non-union, something over which his company had no control.

"The reason I'm here is to ask you to help us ensure that contracts for the improvements to Jane St. and the underpass for Major Mackenzie at Highway 404, go to union contractors only considering our firm is paying for the cost of the project."

Richmond Hill Councillor Gord Rowe said he sympathized with Canada's Wonderland but couldn't support the request because it could set a "dangerous" precedent.

"I can appreciate the im-

portance of the project and the fact they're spending their money up here but this council can't take a position in this matter," he said.

He was backed up by Newmarket Councillor Tom Taylor, who felt no level of government should find itself in such a bind.

Michael MacDonald, from Georgina, fully supported Mr. McCormack, however.

"I feel the people who are paying for the project should have a say in the awarding of the contracts. I really don't think we're setting a precedent."

Mayor Tony Roman, from Markham, felt the whole argument was premature since the contract could wind up in a union firm's hands.

"At this time this is purely a private matter," said solicitor Ed Oakes. "Wouldn't there be something in the contract that doesn't allow for an illegal strike? If that's the case, this council, being a public body and having an interest in seeing the law is upheld, would find itself in a bad position supporting the continuance of an illegal strike."

Mr. Roman, claiming the matter could come before council again and fearing the Region could find itself locked into a position, moved the matter be received and further reviewed. His colleagues took his advice.

"This man is appearing in good faith and is respectfully concerned about problems he's having with his project. I just think it is premature for this council to take a stand," he said.

## Group ready to develop Mills property

A new developer in town dropped into planning committee last week, just to be neighborly.

Two representatives from The Coventry Group and their planner, John Curtis, advised committee members their company had recently purchased the property known as the Mills Roses property — lots straddling Pugsley Avenue, from Crosby Avenue to Centre Street and extending east to the CNR tracks.

Mr. Curtis described the site as "a critical piece of land," close to the centre of Richmond Hill, an industrial area, and GO Transit.

The planner agreed with Ward 2 Councillor Al Duffy, the property presently does not look good, and councillor Duffy replied with "the condition of the property puts it high on the list for development."

The Coventry Group will prepare a plan for development of the area described as high-density, single-family, "af-

fordable" housing, compatible with existing development.

When asked to define "affordable" housing, David Hirsch, Executive Vice-President of The Coventry Group, said they hoped to build homes on lots 30 feet by 100 feet with a selling price as low as \$60,000 and as high as \$70,000 (on today's market).

The developers also propose two acres for a retirement home for senior citizens, although the location is not yet determined.

Mr. Curtis and The Coventry Group said they came to committee to ask for assistance and input from town staff so they could resolve as many problems as possible.

Members of the planning committee agreed it was refreshing to have a developer come in and discuss a purchase within the town and gave assurance of open communications.

## Community Pulse

### Say Yes for York

The York Central Executive Association will host a "Way" meeting on behalf of the United Way of York Region, Thursday October 4 in the Hillcrest Mall Auditorium at 8 p.m.

Barney Danson, this year's Campaign Chairman of York's United Way, will be the guest speaker.

Meanwhile, the United Way, with its slogan, "Say Yes for York", kicks off its six-week campaign next week, hoping to raise \$496,000.

Monday night, Mr. Danson received a donation from Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers, which was holding a reception prior to its official opening on Yonge Street in Richmond Hill yesterday.

The donation totalled \$256, which, according to officials, is the number of ways a Wendy's hamburger can be made.

### Bus safety week

The week of September 23-30 has been declared "School Bus Safety Week" in Ontario. York Region, which has about 18,000 full time students bussed to and from elementary and secondary schools daily, will use the period to develop attitudes toward greater school bus safety throughout the year.

Business Administrators in the Area Offices have lists of films and materials available principals may wish to use.

Bus companies used by YCBE will set up a display, including a standard school bus with flashing lights, for Hillcrest Mall, Richmond Heights Plaza, Markham Place, Aurora South Shopping Centre and Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket. Resource people will be on hand from 4:30-9 p.m. starting Monday.

## Your chance to speak on contract dispute

The Citizens' Advisory Group (CAG) is holding a special meeting tomorrow night (Thursday, September 20) to get community input into the current contract dispute with York County Board of Education and the secondary teachers.

Chairman of the CAG, Janet Fayle, said, "You might call it a community council meeting" as representatives from community organizations have been invited to discuss the problem.

Representatives from both OSSTF and the board will be present to answer questions.

The outcome of the meeting will not have much effect on present negotiations, said Mrs. Fayle, but CAG hopes to make use of present awareness of the community to let the board and the teachers know how the public feels about the issue.

CAG's meeting will be held at Crosby Heights School, in the library at 8 p.m. and is open to any member of the public.

## No slowdowns on Highway 404, Snow says

Regional Chairman Bob Forhan has received word from Transportation Minister James Snow there is no intentional slowdown in construction of Highway 404.

The Region had been worried

because it received a letter from the ministry stating various complications were causing intermittent delays in the roadwork.

"We've now been assured the highway will be worked on

continuously until it's finished," said Mr. Forhan. "There's an \$11 million contract to be let on

September 19 (today) for the completion of the section from Highway 7 to Gormley."

York will have an option on whether it wants one large contract for the roadwork from Gormley to Aurora Sideroad or if it would prefer the job to be broken up into smaller units.