

Local politicians oppose bid for Sunday shopping

By STEVE HOUSTON
Staff Reporter

The Ontario government is passing the political buck in its bid to leave the Sunday shopping issue with municipalities, charge local politicians.

And councillors here fear a domino effect could force local merchants to open in a bid to keep customers, says Regional Councillor Bud Bonner.

He suggests the issue be put before local residents for a vote next year.

"The province is throwing the whole thing back in the lap of the municipalities," Bonner said this week. "They're telling them to look after enforcement of provincial legislation."

The comments come in the wake of the province's proposed Sunday shopping legislation that will make the open or close decision a municipal one.

It will likely be introduced at Queen's Park early next year.

He said local merchants outside the already-exempted tourist areas of Unionville and Markham will probably be forced to open because of their proximity to Metro.

And though not opposed to Sunday openings, Bonner believes a day should be set aside for rest.

Regulations to protect employees who work Sundays should also be implemented, he said.

"There should only be a five-



BUD BONNER
Referendum?

day work week, it doesn't matter what five days," he concluded.

York Regional Chairman Eldred King called the proposed legislation "unfortunate," but said he'd consider a regional jurisdiction over the issue if brought forward.

"The legislation still remains very provocative," King noted. "We need direction from only one source and that should have been the provincial government."

Meanwhile, two of Markham's largest commercial centres are preparing to open their doors to local consumers on Boxing Day this year via a loophole in current legislation.

A large number of merchants at Markham's Markville Shopping Centre plan to do Boxing Day business, as will Sears in the Shops on Steeles and 404 plaza.

But Markham and Stouffville's Canadian Tire Stores have indicated they will remain closed for the holiday and Eaton's at Markville Shopping Centre says its doors will be closed as well.

In the long run, Regional Councillor Ron Moran says Sunday shopping legislation will create demands for more than just consumer services.

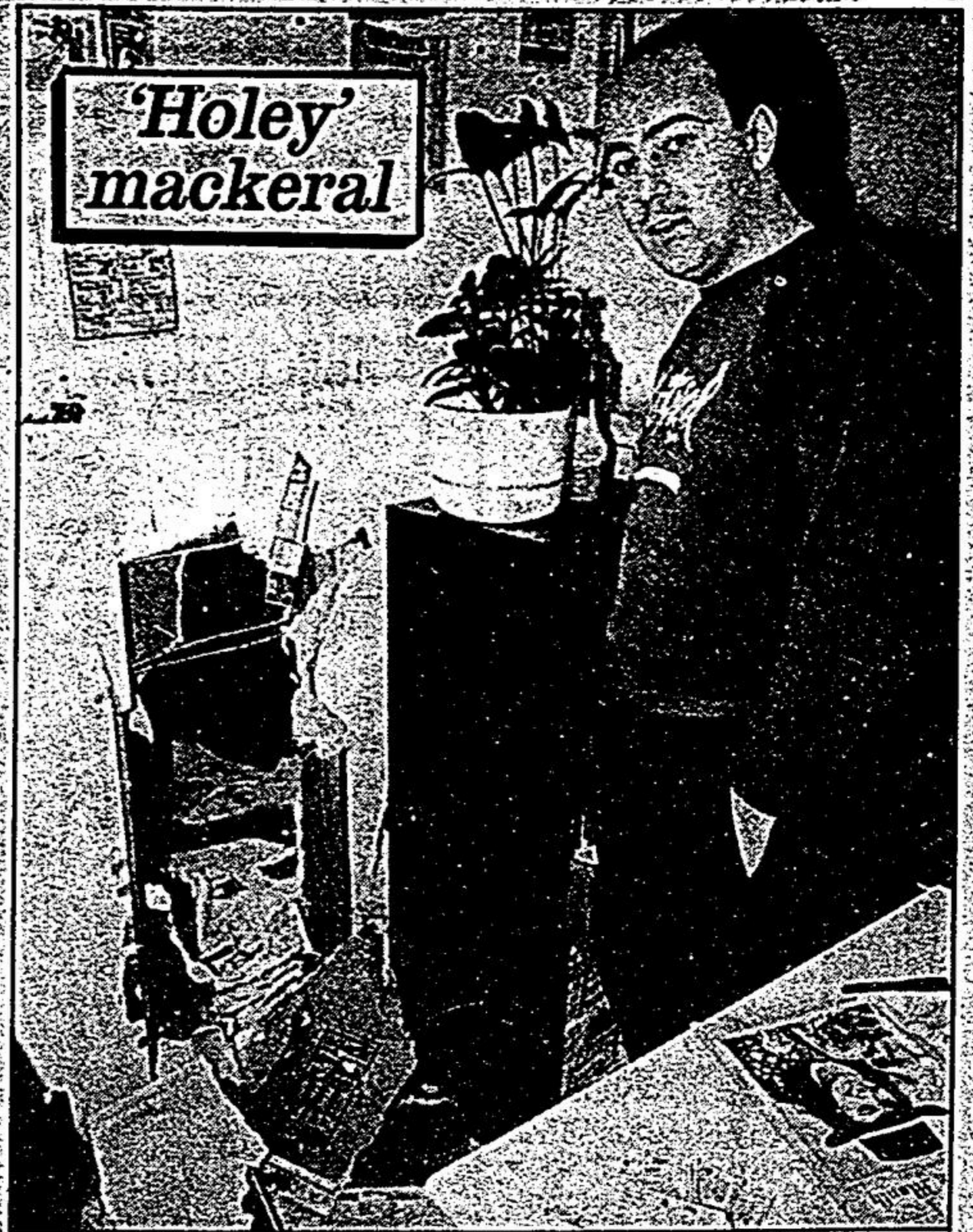
He fears the day of rest principle that's long-governed store closings will be overshadowed with that demand. And he says it's inevitable that professional services will be expected.

"And now you'll have a larger labor bill that will have to be passed onto the product or service," he noted.

But an indication from the public is needed to help municipalities rule on the issue if passed, says Regional Councillor Frank Scarpitti.

An opponent of wide-open Sunday shopping policies, Scarpitti believes Markham's "family-oriented" population is busy with other activities.

"If there are people who want to shop (on Sundays), there are areas they can be accommodated in the town," he said.



Jim Moncada, co-owner of The Paint Can Etc. in Unionville Mews on Hwy 7 stands in front of a hole in the wall made by thieves over the weekend. He estimates damage to the entire plaza is about \$5,000 and about \$1,000 worth of contents was stolen from his store. The thieves entered through a back door in the Veterinary clinic and cut through the drywall into five other businesses. York Regional Police are investigating.
— Sjoerd Witteveen

Massive highrise plan opposed by residents

By STEVE HOUSTON
Staff Reporter

A group of Markham residents is gearing up this month to fight a huge residential development scheme, they fear will dwarf their tiny community.

The site is east of Hwy 48, south of Rouge St. and north of Chatelaine Dr.

The residents, many of whom have been living in the Hwy 48 area south of Hwy 7 for several years, face a plan that will attract some 2,000 new residents to the community.

It calls for three highrise buildings, varying in height from nine to 14 storeys, a new commercial centre, and 54 townhomes.

It was referred by planning committee members last Tuesday to a public meeting in the new year to consider input from local residents.

Peter Ross, president of the Vinegar Hill Ratepayers Association, says the plan is "inappropriate and overwhelming" in the primarily single family and estate residential area.

And he says the current plan is motivated by market demands when it "should be driven by proper planning."

Meanwhile, town officials have pledged that questions regarding the scheme will be answered prior to the public hearing.

Markham Mayor Carole Bell said Tuesday traffic impacts, Hwy 48 improvement plans, the need for a new plaza, and the presence of government-owned lands on the site must be dealt with before going ahead with the proposal.

A large portion of the lands are currently owned by the Ministry of Government Services, while the provincial transportation ministry has given no commitment to widen Hwy 48.

In light of that, the group is demanding uses that Ross says are more compatible with existing development in the area.

But he insists the residents involved aren't anti-development, nor are they being governed by a 'not in my backyard' principle.

"Thrusting 2,000 people and that amount of cars in there is going to create unimaginable problems," he said.

No date has yet been set for the new year.



Residents oppose a mammoth highrise scheme in their neighborhood — south of Rouge St., north of Chatelaine Dr. and east of Hwy 48.
— Bill Lanning

Province RAMS supermailboxes

By PAUL PIVATO
Staff Reporter

The Markham-based lobby group RAM chalked up another victory Thursday in its fight to abolish supermailboxes.

The Ontario Legislature overwhelmingly approved a resolution introduced by Markham MPP Don Cousens and backed by Residents Against Mailboxes (RAM).

The strongly worded resolution calls on the post office to eliminate its controversial supermailbox program and restore door-to-door mail delivery to all new homes.

Two Tory representatives opposed the motion, which was supported by 57 MPPs from all three parties.

RAM spokesperson Anne Derrett called adoption of the resolution "a big step" but said the lobby group still "has a long way to go yet."

Cousens said the supermailboxes make "second class citizens" of new homeowners in urban areas and have turned post office bashing into "Canada's national pastime."

The boxes also make it hard for the elderly to get their mail and

decrease property values where they are located, said Cousens.

He called on the federal government to create an unbiased and "political-free" review board to handle citizens' complaints about the post office.

The Markham MPP also labelled a Canada Post plan to pump more advertising dollars into promotion of the supermailboxes "utterly reprehensible and repulsive."

RAM will now forward the Queen's Park resolution to municipalities across Ontario, according to Derrett.

She said RAM wants municipalities to formally support the Queen's Park motion even though some towns, such as Markham, have already sponsored similar resolutions opposing the supermailbox policy.

"We want the support and need the support of all levels of government," said Derrett. York Region council endorsed a motion supporting RAM's position earlier this year.

The lobby group contends there are now more than 180,000 urban dwellers in Ontario who don't receive home mail delivery.



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