

# Stouffville Tribune

VOL. 102 NO. 43

A Metroland Community Newspaper

Wednesday, October 25, 1989

26  
40 pages

50 cents

## Residents fined?

# False alarms are causing grief for fire dept. officials

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Staff Reporter

Whitchurch-Stouffville and area residents could be slapped with hefty fines to cover climbing false fire alarm costs.

Whitchurch-Stouffville firefighters spend 17 per cent of their time answering false alarms — at a cost of nearly \$20,000 for local ratepayers.

Fire Chief Bill Brown told council in committee at last Tuesday's meeting, the volunteer department sends out a vehicle about 35 times a year to answer dud calls — a "high per cent for one category."

He also said some of the false alarms are repeated at the same residence but the department "has no power" over the companies operating the alarm systems.

"The problem area seems to be with automatic dialers (to alarm companies) caused by anything from shower steam to burnt toast."

He added Bell manhole workers sometimes set off an alarm "just by touching the wrong thing."

The chief said the fire marshal suggested charging repeat "offenders" for a false call as a deterrent for repeat occurrences.

"I've been called out of bed several times at one or two in the morning. The problem happens continually with alarm companies — some stationed in Ottawa — with thousands of customers," he said.

Councillor Doug Alles said he would like to see a letter sent to the province and suggested a device (to record the calls) should be on record, "otherwise we don't have foresight to see what we're dealing with."

Councillor Emmerson said residents should be informed more clearly that the Whitchurch-Stouffville fire department is not full-time, but works on a volunteer basis.

"It takes time and money answering to false alarms."

Chief Brown told council the costs include men's wages, costs of a vehicle and operational costs — which, three years ago, totalled to about \$560 an hour. "It would be considerably higher now," he added.

"Drop a \$700 bill on someone's plate and they'll look at something other than burnt toast," said Town Treasurer Ed Blackburn.

Ironically, it was reported several calls were to town-owned buildings such as the recreation complex and the library.

## Stouffville store target of thieves

York Regional Police are still looking for suspects who broke into the Stouffville National Sports Centre store at the Stouffville Sales Barn this weekend.

According to store management and police officials, the thieves gained access to the building sometime after closing Friday by driving a vehicle, "probably a truck," through the side door of the store.

Once inside, the thieves drove away with "a large quantity of stolen goods" and damaged the door structure.

Police arrived at the store at about 7:45 a.m. after being called

by the store's hockey department supervisor, Dean Lacoursiere. The employee made the discovery Saturday at 6 a.m.

Store management said police told them the vehicle used was probably a truck because of the "high hit" or impact marks set high up on the door, but neither police officials nor store management will reveal the cost of damage or stolen goods until a press release is available.

However, a spokesman for the police said a detective has been assigned the case to uncover any "clues" the thieves may have left behind.

## New arrival



Photo/RICK MADONIK

Doug and Barb Todd of Stouffville were visited by their new sister, Alexis, and the yard sported a large white and yellow stork which announced to the neighborhood of the baby's arrival.

### CONTEST

Carve the best pumpkin in our contest. See page 16.



### Cash for news

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### RUNNERS

SDSS tried but couldn't retain cross-country crown. See page 12.

