

Small business would be hurt by WCB changes

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

Changes to Workers' Compensation - including a proposal to force all businesses to contribute to the system - will place undue financial hardships on small business; the president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce said last week.

Helene Johnson said the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), representing the local board's concerns at the provincial level, is concerned Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) reforms will make employers' uncompetitive in a "tough economy."

"These changes would have a terrible effect on all business but the real impact will be on small business like those in Whitchurch-Stouffville," Johnson warns.

Proposed WCB changes would impose a universal coverage system where employer-only businesses will be forced to pay into the system, Johnson said.

"These (WCB) people are not living in the real world," Johnson added.

Another major change proposed by the WCB is to include a 'chronic stress entitlement' to the plan which critics charge will create further system abuse.

"It is imperative that WCB reform not add to the employers' costs and that investor confidence not be further eroded by costly initiatives which do nothing to attract and retain investment for Ontario," an Ontario Chamber of Commerce letter addressed to Ontario Premier Bob Rae states.

"The OCC urges you to provide the employers in Ontario with assurances that your government will not implement WCB reforms which might hurt our members' abilities to compete and win in the challenging global economy," the letter continues.

The OCC says the board's current \$178-million insurance claim 'liability' is "clearly unacceptable especially since the WCB has moved into a new building."

"The business community in Ontario needs to know that you advocate a workers' compensation system that adheres to providing reasonable compensation for workplace accident victims within a fiscally responsible framework. We need action to give employers confidence in the system," OCC members told Rae in a letter opposing the reforms.

Johnson said the chamber group is writing to all its members urging them to write of call their local governmental representatives to "strongly object to this legislation."



Photo/STEVE SOMERVILLE

A&P picketed

Members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union picketed in front of A&P this week to protest what the Ontario Labor Relations Board ruled as illegal replacement workers in supplying A&P's Miracle Mart, Superfresh and Dominion Store outlets as part of the on-going strike in the grocery chain.

Council

No heritage site for mayor's home

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

Mayor Fran Sainsbury does not want her Ninth Line home proclaimed a Whitchurch-Stouffville heritage farm house.

The mayor was less than amused this week when Ward 6 councillor Ken Prentice suggested the Sainsbury circa. 1862 farm house be proclaimed 'heritage' after she voted in favor of supporting the town's heritage theme.

It was puzzling at first why Prentice asked for a recorded vote earlier in the evening when officials unanimously voted to "recognize the value of heritage to the town's image and its contribution and to the economic development of the town at large."

"I'm happy to see that heritage and all that means was unanimously endorsed. It's gratifying to see and I think as a first priority it would be a fitting gesture to support (the Sainsbury home) as heritage to save it from the clutches of development," Prentice said.

But the mayor said, on the

contrary, that her home, which is co-owned by her husband Denis, should be left off the list of heritage homes "so I can work with the heritage group" without a conflict.

While the mayor does not sit on the seven-member committee, she has worked with the group and has offered her home for heritage tours.

Ward 2 councillor Stephen Bellerby brushed off Prentice's suggestion as a "malicious

utterance" and accused him of trying to earn votes for next year's municipal election.

"It's a little early for the (election) silly season isn't it? I appeal to the team to please refrain from sniping at each other. We are not up here to deal with personalities, but issues that face this town," Bellerby said.

Prentice's suggestion to proclaim Sainsbury's farm as heritage was not voted on.

Rural economy ideas given council once-over

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antique shops should be studied as a possible revenue grabber for the town and to leave the option out would be unfair.

Prentice said while he agrees antique shops might be a viable use in some areas, the option should be scratched from the list "until the end of a potential OMB hearing."

"If we're going to pick and choose each item, nothing will ever happen in Whitchurch-Stouffville," Mayor Fran Sainsbury said.

Prentice also said the use of 'fish farms' should be deleted from the list since the town is currently involved in a court battle to salvage its water usage.

He said fish farms divert 70,000 gallons of the town's water supply "down the ditch" each day.

"We have one very large court case in front of us in which we've spent considerable funds and we have just opposed one antique barn which is being appealed at the OMB," he added.

But Prentice couldn't get enough support to have the items deleted because most officials said the list is of a general nature.

"These are just generic approvals and are not to be construed as if we are speaking to one particular application," Bellerby said.

Officials approved EDAC's list of rural economic promotions with cycling, antique barns and fish farms included.

Crime Watch

Home ransacked Friday

A Coultice Drive home was ransacked Friday afternoon during a break-in.

A thief or thieves entered the home by forcing a kitchen window, and once inside searched the house.

However, the residents were unable to determine if any property had been stolen.

Damage to the kitchen window is estimated by police at \$100.

Tiles swiped

Granite tiles worth \$3,000 were stolen sometime over the weekend from a home under construction in Stouffville.

An interior garage door was forced open by a thief or thieves at the Sherrick Drive home, which is in the final stages of construction.

Once inside, the granite tiles were taken. Damage to door is estimated at \$50.



Ready for Santa

Santa's elves at the Maples of Ballantrae were gearing up for Santa's visit every Sunday from now until Christmas. From left, are; Paula Weisflock, Melissa Miller and Trish Dickson.

Photo/LORI EMMERSON

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