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Construction dispute turns ugly

By CHARLENE McCUE
Correspondent

Police were called to downtown Stouffville on Friday after a dispute between a merchant and construction workers broke out.

While hair salon owner Mario Petramala was taken away in a police cruiser, and an axe hit a construction worker, no charges were laid.

Petramala, owner of Mario's Hair-styling on Main Street, a 30-year old business, told *The Tribune*, the incident

took place when he attempted to tear down scaffolding that was put up on the awning of his business.

The scaffolding is connected to the large construction project next door.

When construction workers saw Petramala trying to remove the scaffolding, police were called.

Petramala said he's been plagued with problems linked to the construction for a long time. He said he's waited for a year for the construction company to, as agreed, extend his chimney. Petramala said town staff and the developer promised the chimney work

would be done before the wall of the new building was put up. Despite repeated pleas, including those to the town, the promise has not been kept, he said.

Mayor Wayne Emerson said no promises were made or broken by the town. "It's (being treated) the same as any residential property," said Emerson.

As time passed, the problems escalated. Petramala said he's had to "turn off the heat" to his property to avoid fumes from entering the business as well as to an apartment, located above the salon. Petramala said he can't rent the apartment without heat. Hair dryers are the "only source of warmth" in the hair salon, stressed Petramala.

The town approved the building without first looking at the implications, charged David Petramala, Mario's son. The Petramalas said they thought they could depend on project developer Quinmar Investments because the company is locally based.

Bill Murphy, president of Quinmar Investments, said the axe Petramala was using to tear the scaffolding down "bounced" off the wall and "hit" a construction worker in the head. "It's a good thing he had a construction hat on or he would have been hurt," said Murphy.

Murphy said his company has offered to do more for Petramala than they are legally required. "Already we have changed his hydro service and bricked the windows." He said he would extend the chimney but Petramala will not let engineers on the roof to see what work needs to be done.

A Quinmar official is suggesting that fear of change is playing a major factor in this matter. "We understand that some people don't like change and we are doing everything possible to make it a smooth transition for Mario," said Jody Mangiardi, Quinmar Investments project manager. The new development which includes a bank will increase Petramala's property value and enhance his business, said Mangiardi. The matter is in the hands of lawyers.

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