

SPORTS: Ownership group expanded

# New partners for Spirit owner

Improving fan base a priority

BY BRUCE STAPLEY  
Correspondent

The Spirit of Stouffville has broadened its ownership base.

Goodwood resident Zeev Werek and Richmond Hill's Larry Goldberg have become equal partners with Spirit owner and president Ed Hakonson, the Provincial Junior A Hockey League club announced Monday.

Hakonson will continue in his role of Spirit president.

"The thrust of the club will be the three of us working together as a unified force," he said.

For Werek, a development and construction business operator who has lived in the area for 15 years, this is a first foray into the business of hockey.

He expressed interest in buying into the Belleville Bulls of the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) last year after watching his nephew play on the team, but decided against the idea.

Werek and Goldberg, who runs an advertising agency, decided to join forces with Hakonson and the Spirit while watching their sons play AAA level summer hockey in Stouffville this year.

"We decided we wanted to get involved," Werek said, adding he had originally considered offering to purchase the Spirit on his own.

Hakonson said owning the Spirit is too big a load for one person. "After purchasing the Spirit in 1995, I would soon find out what a tremendous job it is to build a Junior A club."

He said Werek and Goldberg represent a perfect fit for the Spirit. "Over the years, I have considered several partners, but in most cases I felt that their reason for joining the hockey club was not for our true goal, which is to help young gentlemen progress along life's path, receive a great education from their hockey efforts and maybe even reach the NHL," Hakonson said. "These two gentlemen (Werek and Goldberg) are interested in the growth of our team."

Hakonson said the demands of his business, along with a desire to make more time available for his family, made it difficult to apply himself fully to the business of running the Spirit.

"I really didn't want to walk away from the club. I've come this

far." Werek said becoming involved with the Spirit is his way of putting something back into the community.

"I'm not going into this to make money. But the community's been really good to me. I've played men's hockey and I've made a lot of lifetime friendships through my son's hockey."

"I really like the way the team is run. I'd be afraid of coming in and wrecking the chemistry by making changes. But if there's things we need to do to improve the team, we'll do it."

Werek said he and Goldberg aren't looking to push for immediate changes in the way the club is run. "I really like the way the team is run. I'd be afraid of coming in and wrecking the chemistry by making changes. But if there's things we need to do to improve the team, we'll do it."

He said he and Goldberg would apply themselves to broadening the fan appeal of the Spirit. He suggested the team might introduce a mascot at home games, along with holding special nights at the arena.

"We want to get the people to come out and see what a great product it is."

Hakonson said Werek and Goldberg's presence would make for a better team on the ice. "With Larry and Zeev promoting this team in a professional manner, it will give Brian Perrin (Spirit head coach) and his team more support."

He cited a fast start this season, with the Spirit in third place in the eight team North Conference, as proof the organization is heading in the right direction.

"Finally, we have a team to be reckoned with. Although it certainly takes time, we built solidly."

He said the growing support shown by the Stouffville business community proves that the Spirit have become a vital part of the community. "We have over 90 local businesses supporting the team, and all of our players are sponsored for the first time."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Parkland Public School Grade 4 students wait outside the offices of MPP Dave Tsubouchi Thursday. The students and their parents are protesting their being bused to another school.

# Parent arrested, protest goes provincial

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

Recovering from six hours in a jail cell Wednesday, Parkland Public School parent Desmond Ali took his fight to MPP David Tsubouchi's office Thursday.

And the York Region District School Board also upped the stakes in the month-long dispute with parents by issuing a letter Thursday threatening to obtain restraining orders against them if they caused any other disruptions at the school.

Markham MPP Tsubouchi was not at his Woodbine Avenue constituency office when Ali, two other parents and eight Grade 4 children knocked on the locked door. Only Ali was permitted inside and he was told the issue remains between the school board and the parents.

"Unfortunately, all the doors are closed now. It just keeps going around and around in circles. Meanwhile, no one is taking responsibility," Ali said.

But he's determined to continue the battle against the board and its decision to bus Grade 4s to Milliken Mills Public School for a year because of crowding at Parkland.

Tsubouchi said in a later interview there's really not much he can do about the situation.

"I met with (board chairperson) Bill Crothers and he said he would do his best to resolve the issue in the best interests of the children. I have to believe he will do that," Tsubouchi said.

"I have already passed the concerns along to the Minister of Education, but at the end of the day the decision was made that the issue is between the school board and the parents. There's not much more I can do than that."

Meanwhile, a letter issued by Toronto law firm Keel Cottrelle warns all parents not to disrupt classes at Parkland or they will face severe legal consequences.

# Safety concerns examined

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Four-way stop signs, traffic lights or speed bumps were all cited as possible ways to get people to slow down and observe traffic laws.

"I don't know if bumps or the wash-board effect devices will do the trick. They're no good in the winter-time with the snow," Emerson said.

"But I do know something is needed. We have to look at this."

Council accepted a staff recommendation asking York Region to carry out a sight distance study at the intersection at Vivian Road and Warden Avenue.

Peterse said there are many problems at the intersection, including speeding drivers and poor visibility due to fences, trees and weeds. Her solutions include four-way overhead flashing lights for the intersection.

Some residents are calling for a speed reduction from 70 km/h to 60 km/h.

Police enforcement through spot radar is the only

effective means of controlling speeding, public works director Paul Whitehouse reported, adding a four-way stop will not control speeders.

Whitehouse told council he inspected the Vivian Road and Warden Avenue intersection, and said there are some visual concerns for drivers heading south on Warden.

"The sight distance to the east can be affected by the roadway vegetation, if it is not cut on a regular basis," he said.

"Also, the intersection is skewed and the road profile approaching the intersection could make it difficult for motorists to judge distances, especially southbound motorists looking eastward."

Traffic calming devices such as speed bumps are not recommended on rural arterial roadways, Whitehouse added. "Traffic calming is more conducive to residential areas within urban centres where there is more demand and where it has been proven to be both appropriate and effective," he said.

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