

# Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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## Businesses hope war jitters end soon

*'Purse strings tight' as U.S. invades Iraq*

BY JEFF MITCHELL  
Staff Writer

Chalk it up to pre-war jitters. But now the uncertainty surrounding America's intentions toward Iraq has been addressed, analysts are hopeful an uncharacteristic dip in consumer confidence among Canadians will be relegated to the past.

"I think people have tightened their purse strings," said Ruth Burkholder, president of the Markham Board of Trade.

"That's why consumer confidence has been sliding; everything is an unknown factor."

That "everything" refers to the months of speculation on whether the United States would back its tough talk with military action against Iraq. On Wednesday night, President George W. Bush provided the answer in spades, launching an air and ground war on his nemesis, Saddam Hussein.

As early as last Monday, the day after the president ordered Saddam to relinquish power within 48 hours, markets began responding positively.

That has led to hope February's slide in consumer confidence will register a similar reversal, said Peter Hall of the Conference Board of Canada.

He said results of a survey in February showed consumer

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## Rotary rolls out Taste of Spring



Julie Testa (front), co-proprietor of Willow Springs Winery on Bethesda Road, tests a new batch with members of the Rotary Club of Stouffville. From left, John Pollard, Ian MacKenzie, Mary Francis Juk, Nancy Myers, Hilary Richards and Ken Prentice. Twelve restaurants and eight wineries, including Willow Springs, will serve up their best at Rotary's A Taste of Spring Monday, March 31, from 6 to 9 pm at Sleepy Hollow Golf and Country. Tickets are \$45 from 905-640-6608, 905-642-0363 or 905-642-4801.

STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

## Cultural barriers block services

*Offer social services in languages of new residents: councillor*

BY SIMONE JOSEPH  
Staff Writer

The elderly man who called Markham Councillor Tony Wong for help about 1 1/2 years ago was worried he would be left homeless after being kicked out by his son.

Mr. Wong would have referred this man to regional staff for help if it weren't for one fact: the man spoke Mandarin and little English.

So Mr. Wong referred him, instead, to a community agency.

This call was one of many he receives from residents anxious to get help but unable to access services.

"Usually they have tried to deal with regional staff and they get nowhere," he said.

"I get calls indicating a high degree of dissatisfaction."

Mr. Wong believes more needs to be done to help people with language and cultural barriers access regional services.

Diversity training for regional staff, partnerships with community agencies and improved marketing and public education would be a start, he said.

"Our region should take a leadership role to provide culturally sensitive services," he said at a community services and housing committee meeting Wednesday.

Visible minorities are becoming visible majorities across the region, according to Statistics Canada census data from 2001 presented at the meeting. In Markham, South Asian residents were the fastest growing

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