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STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Preparing for Santa

Ken MacDonald of Black & McDonalds Ltd. decorates the Christmas tree in Civic Square in downtown Stouffville in preparation for special events this weekend. The BIA Festival of Lights is Friday night and the Stouffville Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade is Saturday afternoon. For more information, see pages 8 and 10.

Company fined, residents' charges dropped

BY MIKE ADLER
 Staff Writer

A Vaughan company was fined \$10,000 for destroying more than 1,000 trees in Pickering, while hundreds of charges were dropped against three Stouffville natives in a Whitby courtroom last week.

Rosebank Farms Ltd. of Concord faced 332 charges under Durham Region's tree bylaw, each carrying a maximum fine of \$10,000, in connection with a March 2003 incident in Pickering.

The company, formed a week after the trees were cut, accepted responsibility later that month in a letter from president Phil Colucci, who claimed trees on the farm were cut

because "a local farmer asked if some of the trees could be used for cedar posts."

In court last Friday, the City of Pickering allowed the company to plead guilty to cutting the entire group of trees, and it was fined \$10,000. Rosebank was also ordered to plant 1,000 trees on the property and maintain them for five years.

'SLAP ON WRIST'

The fine is "just a slap on the wrist," the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition stated in a news release.

Identical charges were dropped in court against Christopher and Richard Burkholder of Stouffville and Ryan Burkholder of

Kitchener, whose names were on the deed when 1,079 trees were illegally cut. The three men no longer own the land.

Soon after the cutting occurred, Pickering CAO Tom Quinn told the Pickering News-Advertiser he was advising the city clerk to aim for the maximum in fines and Durham Regional Councillor Maurice Brenner, speaking at a gathering beside the property in April 2003, said the city would demand the heaviest possible penalty.

"There's to be a powerful message sent out, which means maximum, not minimum," he said at the time.

The city, however, allowed a collective plea

See TREE, page 5

9-YEAR HISTORY OF TOWN HALL PROPOSALS

Theatre plan has money behind it

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
 Staff Writer

The time is ripe to finally put an arts and culture centre into the old town hall in downtown Stouffville, Mayor Sue Sherban says.

Funding in the amount of \$750,000 has already been earmarked by the town for such a project for 2006. And most importantly, according to the mayor, "council is taking the lead on this."

When she ran for the position in the last municipal election, Mrs. Sherban made a commitment to make a decision on the building before her term was up.

More people want a cultural centre than in the past, said Pam Mandich, a theatre supporter. She points to the phenomenal growth of the York Durham Academy for the Performing Arts as one example. In only its third season, the academy has a cast of more than 100 children and adults and will put on five productions this year.

COUNCIL TAKES LEAD

Mayor Sherban feels this proposal has a better chance of succeeding because council, rather than residents or business interests, is taking the lead. The town was never willing or able to commit funds to private proposals.

"Infrastructure money is available that has not been available in the last couple of years," she added, noting the province recently announced a grant program for heritage facilities in need of improvement.

All previous attempts to put a theatre and multi-purpose facility into the building were proposed by arts groups, not government. No previous proposal

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