

Helping hand for women entrepreneurs

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

Michelle Butt was excited and apprehensive when she decided to return to work 18 months after staying home to raise four children.

She wanted to create a business consulting company, but did not have the support she needed.

"I was looking for a way to connect to others and find services with compatible values to grow the business, get it off the ground and expand," Ms Butt said.

She discovered the Power of Women Exchange last year, a networking group in Durham Region. The group helped her so much, she

decided to bring it to York Region.

The 37-year-old Stouffville resident is launching the chapter in Markham Nov. 13.

Such a group is needed, she believes, because there are big differences between how men and women do business.

"There are the hunters and the gatherers. Men hunt for sales and business. We do business by getting information and building friendship, rapport," she said.

Women want to make a connection before they do business, Ms Butt said.

"You do not want to feel you are being sold to the minute you walk through the door," she said.

There are other networking groups for women, but this one is unique, she claimed, noting, "We help build businesses and create an environment of support."

The group has an education division where members can take workshops run by other members. For example, an accountant in the group can offer a finance workshop.

The only criteria for attending meetings or events is being a woman in business or thinking of going into business.

Ms Butt is grateful for the help the group has provided, saying, "It gave me the confidence to get out there and keep going."



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Stouffville's Michelle Butt is starting a women's business networking group with a meeting in Markham.

FAST FACTS

The launch of the Power of Women Exchange, York Region chapter

► **COST:** \$22, includes lunch, networking and speakers. At the launch, the group will offer \$30 off an annual membership.

► **DATE:** Nov. 13, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

► **REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** Nov. 8

► **PLACE:** La Rosa Banquet Hall, 25 Lanark Rd. in Markham.

► **WHO CAN ATTEND:** Anyone female, inside or outside York Region.

It helped her most in building a network, since, "You don't know where to begin, you don't know where your market is."

The group meets for lunch the

second Tuesday of each month.

Meetings cost \$27.50 for non-members. You can attend two meetings as a guest.

After that, you can buy a \$185 annual membership. There is a

one-time processing fee of \$100.

For more information, e-mail michelle@powe.ca, go to www.powe.ca or call 416-996-2843.

Room for everyone at mega Canadian Tire store

BY JIM MASON
Staff Writer

Sorry, guys, it's not all about you at Stouffville's new Canadian Tire.

The mega store next door to Wal-Mart off Hwy. 48 opened yesterday. The official opening next week includes an autograph session with Leaf great Borje Salming.

Mark's Work Warehouse opened in the same building in the Hoover Park Town Centre development yesterday. The two stores are connected.

BOSTON PIZZA, TIMS OPENING

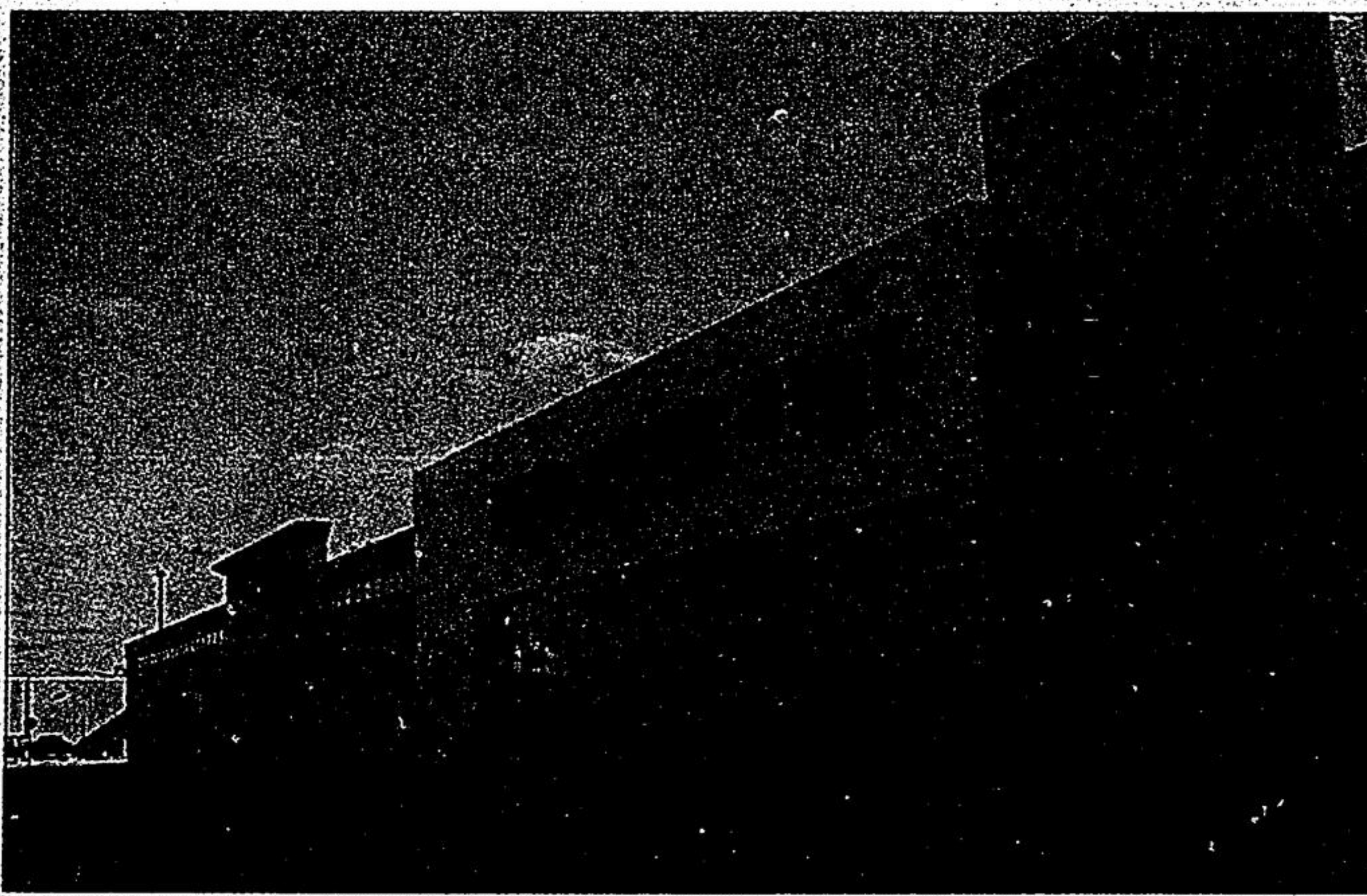
Boston Pizza opens next month. Other outlets will include Tim Hortons, Dollarama, La Senza and Subway.

It's 43,000 square feet, more than three times the size of the old store on Main Street that closed Monday. That doesn't include a 24,000-square-foot garden centre that will have a cottage look.

Aisles are wider. A large Christmas display greets you first.

There are 120 employees, almost double that of the old location.

The new store's layout is anchored with Driving, Playing, Living and Fixing areas representing the company's cornerstone businesses, automotive, leisure and sporting goods, hardware and tools, home décor,



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Mark's Work Warehouse and Canadian Tire opened in south Stouffville yesterday.

home maintenance and repair, outdoor living and lawn and garden products.

The décor section stands out, says dealer Paul Lamoureux.

"It's what women want," he said. "And we think all our customers will love the store."

Paint and furnishings are big. An additional \$3.5 million in inventory

was brought in to stock the store.

Extra money was pumped into energy conservation, including \$40,000 for special lighting and large windows that draw in light and heat.

It's the fifth store for the Lamoureuxs, who took over the Stouffville location in early 2006. Their other stores were in Dundas, Aldershot, Scarborough and Nipigon.

FAMILY AFFAIR

All five members of the family work in the store, full or part-time. They love the country feel of Stouffville, on the doorstep of Toronto.

"We live in Stouffville and we've put everything we have into this," he said. "That's how committed we are."

They're proud to support local charity including York Regional Police's Christmas toy drive. Last year, they donated \$12,000 in toys to the campaign.

"That's important," he said. "If you shop at local businesses, the money goes back into the community."

Canadian Tire Corporation operates more than 1,100 stores, gas stations and car washes, employing more than 50,000 Canadians. Canadian Tire Retail and its associate dealers have 468 stores across the country.

For more information, go to canadiantire.ca

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