

# Stouffville legion shoots down closure rumours

## Branch hopes to move after expropriation

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
Staff Writer

Despite the rumours of its demise, Stouffville's legion is still open for business.

"Come on out, rent the hall (and if you want, join, come and join,"

said Murray Pattenden, president of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 459.

The branch has even lowered rental rates in an effort to attract business.

For months, word about town has been that due to the region's work on the Ninth Line, which includes eliminating the jog at Main Street, the legion has closed its doors.

While it is true the legion's build-

ing will eventually be expropriated, it is currently on hold because of questions raised about an environmental assessment report, which was released late last year.

No information was available about the nature of the concern. York Region's project manager for the Ninth Line, Richard So, noted the most common complaint brought forward during the 30-day public review period is that "(we) haven't satisfactorily met all the impacts."

### ROAD PROJECT DELAYED

Questions raised about the project may also have nothing to do with the Stouffville portion, as work on the Ninth Line extends from Main Street south to Major Mackenzie Drive in Markham.

"Until that is resolved, we will not be proceeding with the project," Mr. So said.

The environmental assessment is now under review by the Ministry of the Environment.

"From the region's point of view,

we have done or due diligence — from the Ministry of the Environment's requirement and the Environmental Act," Mr. So said.

While the delay has enabled the legion to operate as usual, it is at a stand-still when it comes to solidifying the new location the organization knows it will one day require.

So far, the Legion has lost out on one site it was eyeing up for the new building, because of the delay, but legion officials are hoping another property they like, located behind Novapharm, will still be available when the branch is able to move.

"As long as the region keeps holding us up, we could lose it," said Dave McQuaker, District E Commander for the Royal Canadian Legion. "Thank goodness property hasn't moved fast."

Not only are the rumours of the branch closure affecting hall rentals, they are also, in part, costing them members.

The Stouffville branch has 287 members, some of whom are veter-

ans, but many who are not.

"We haven't had a new veteran come in for quite a few years," Mr. Pattenden said.

After initially operating as an association solely for veterans and their families, a few years ago, the legion, nation-wide, opened its membership up to any Canadian citizen or British subject in order to remain in existence. However, even that has not greatly increased membership numbers.

### RENTAL RATES LOWERED

"It used to be known as a watering hole and it's hard to get rid of that (reputation)," Mr. McQuaker said, noting the legion is a community volunteer organization, as well as place for veterans to gather.

The ladies auxiliary to the branch caters lunches, dinners and other events. It, too, is also looking for new members and volunteers to help at functions.

For more information on the Stouffville branch, call 905-640-1714.

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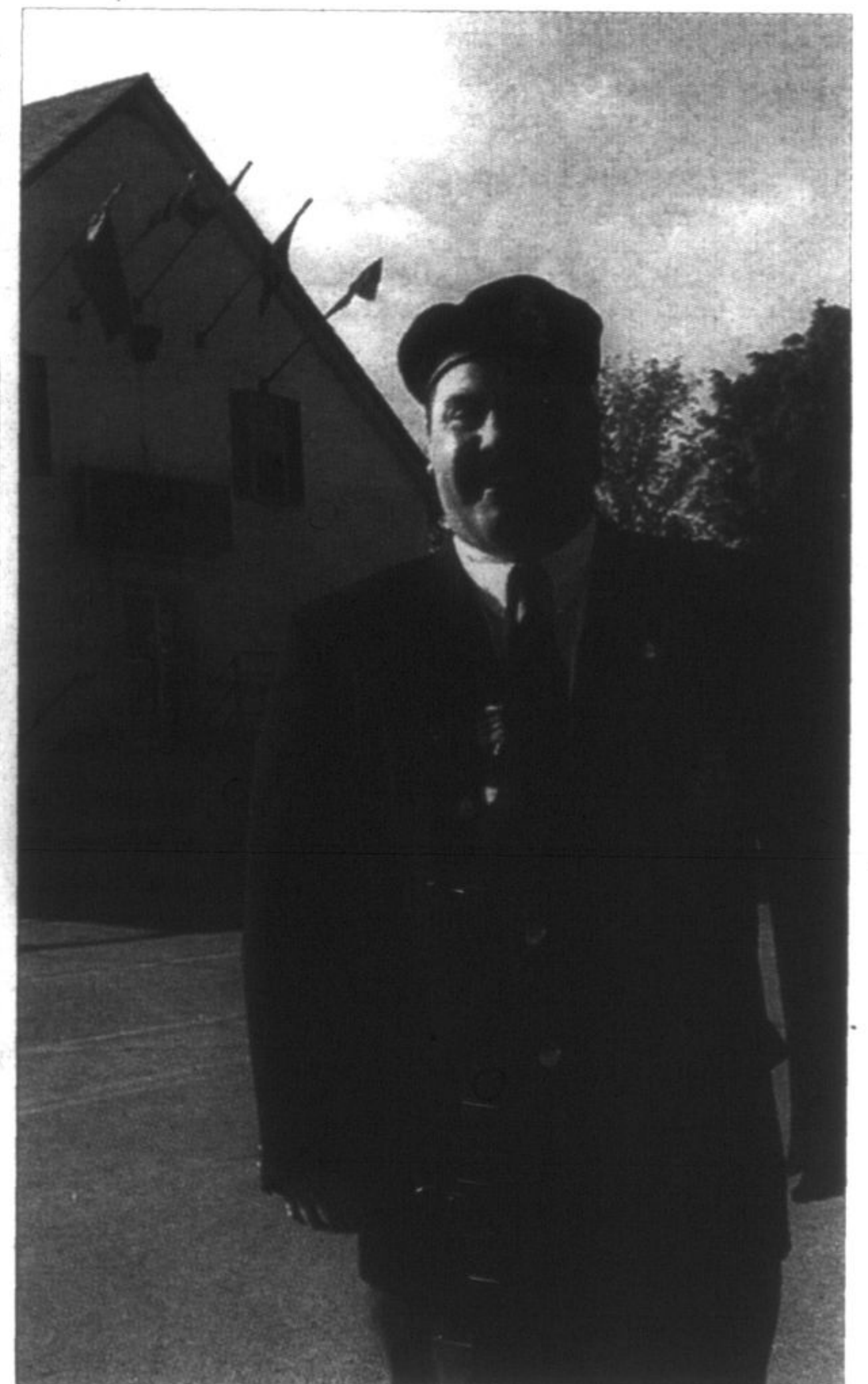
President Murray Pattenden and the legion Branch 459 executive have lowered rental rates at the Ninth Line hall in an attempt to draw business back.

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