

ONTARIO BUDGET



STAFF PHOTO/SANDRA BOLAN

Edward Nelles, executive director of the chamber of commerce, tells MPP Helena Jaczek when it comes to improving local business, our own transit system is needed.

# Be more businesslike, merchants tell MPP

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Run the government like a private corporation and cut the fat.

That was the overall message a handful of local business people sent to Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Helena Jaczek, who held a pre-budget consultation at Sleepy Hollow Golf and Country Club near Stouffville Friday.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce put the event together.

Although there is no date set for the release of the provincial budget, Ms Jaczek expects it to be in mid- to late April. If it fails to pass, an election will be held within a month.

"I'm perfectly happy to fire half of (the government workers). I'm just wondering where they'll end up," she asked in the casual back and forth forum.

It's a fact of life in the private sector the local business people, who have had to downsize, told their MPP.

In 2012, Ontario had 6.5 public sector employees per 1,000 people. The national average was 9.7 employees per 1,000 people, according to material provided by Ms Jaczek.

Cutting departments by 5 per cent, for example, does not work, she said, noting the Liberals are working with them.

"You can't blame them. You are them,"

said one member in the small crowd.

"We're so fed up it's not funny. ... People only do what they need to do to survive to the next election," said Patrick Straw of NESS Security.

The government is working towards eliminating the deficit by 2017/18, she said, but in order to do that, while avoiding across-the-board cuts, there are various avenues that can be taken.

Along with reducing government spending, Ms Jaczek put forward the option of selling government assets such as land and the LCBO and increasing corporate taxes.

"If you hit corporations we're going to lose them. It's a no-brainer," said Joe Gallo, a sales rep at Gallo Real estate.

It is, however, what the NDP want, according to Ms Jaczek. And based on that, if an election were to be called this spring, the NDP will gain more seats — in the north and Windsor areas.

When it comes to improving local business, our own transit system is needed, according to Edward Nelles, executive director of the chamber.

That, according to Ms Jaczek is something residents should consider during this year's municipal election.

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