

Stouffville resident hopes to generate business in the Dominican

By Bruce Stapley

Ask Bob Couperthwaite how business is these days and he'll tell you it's going south – to the Dominican Republic.

The 53-year-old owner/operator of Bulldog Generators on Ringwood Dr. in Stouffville is currently in Sosua, Dominican Republic, setting up a satellite branch of the business he started up here in town seven years ago. He intends to sell and service his Guardian line of home standby and commercial generators on the Caribbean island, taking advantage of that country's inconsistent supply of electricity.

"Their infrastructure is just not there, the hydro is turned off for a minimum of four hours a day," he said before departing for Sosua on the Dominican Republic's north coast. He is looking to service the growing electrical backup needs of the country's half million German, Canadian and British residents, along with meeting the requirements of the numerous resorts.

"Every house down there has a generator, and so do all the resorts. They all need servicing, and basically, (the generators) are replaced every five years. So I'll start with the service work and then go for the future sales."

Bob has rented a shop on Sosua's main street and has hired a receptionist while he lines up sales and service contractors over the next few months. "I'm connected with a couple of builders through a friend who has the Remax franchise down there. Eventually I'll have to set

up a shop for servicing the generators."

He's hoping to meet with the same success in the Dominican that he has had in his Stouffville location. "With all the blackouts and the unstable power grid it's turned into a lucrative business. And we get lots of commercial business because they can't have downed hydro."

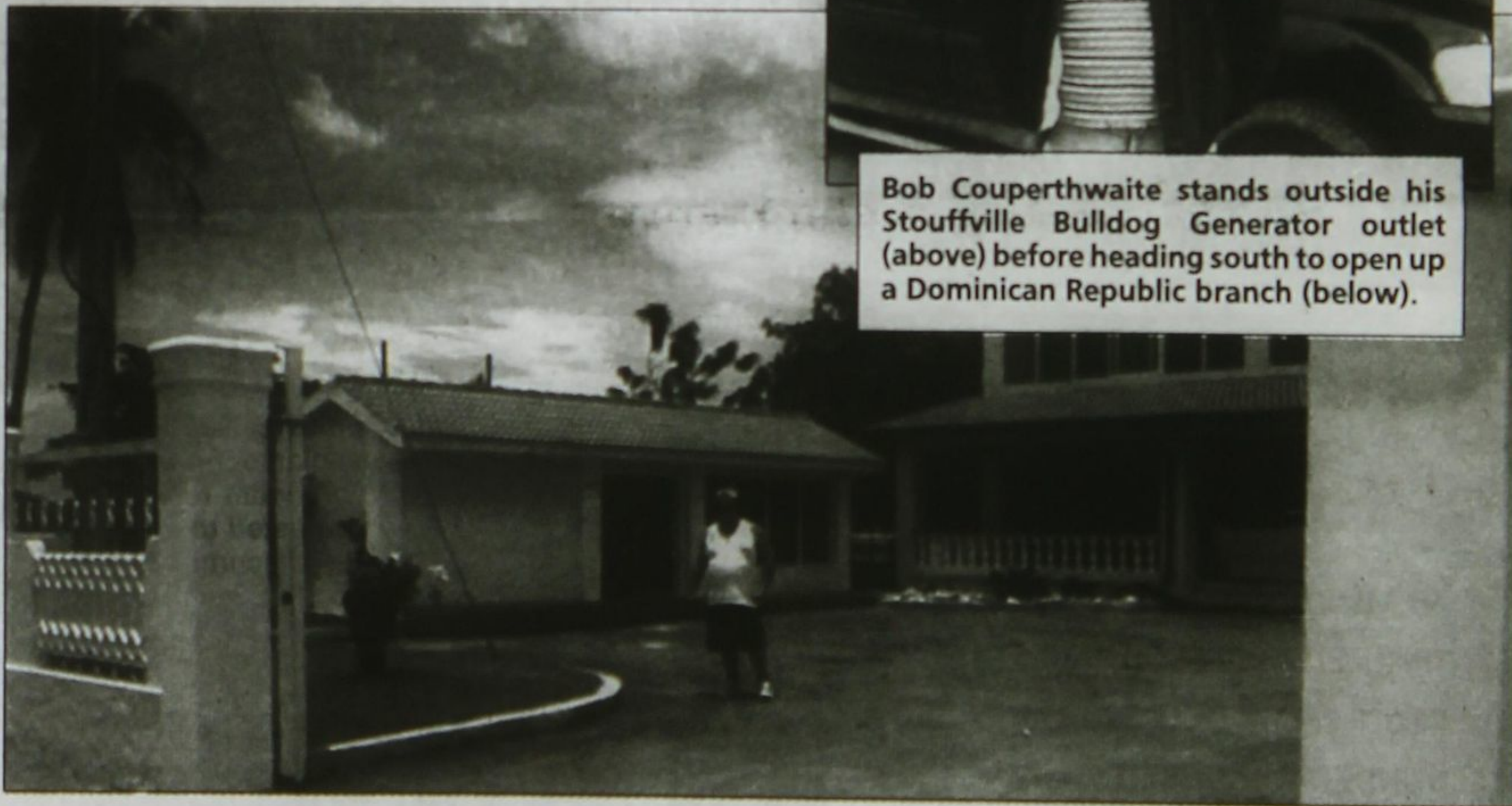
His list of clients includes Enbridge, Magna, the Toronto School Board, Union Gas and various medical research labs. He services accounts throughout Western Ontario and has travelled as far as Halifax to look after his clients' needs.

Bob said he's taking a long-term approach to his Dominican operation and could see himself possibly branching out to other Caribbean islands. "If I can get things established I could see myself eventually semi-retiring down there."

Another incentive is the sunny, warm climate of the Caribbean. "I've always liked warmth. I've got some arthritis in my hands and I'm starting not to be able to work in the cold."



Bob Couperthwaite stands outside his Stouffville Bulldog Generator outlet (above) before heading south to open up a Dominican Republic branch (below).



Former Stouffville resident and National Ballet first soloist Stephanie Hutchison enjoys a late fall stroll with her daughter Charlotte. Stephanie will return to her full-time dance career in January.

HELP! I NEED SOMEBODY

Press zero to be disconnected

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

A recent CBC Radio survey, How may I help you? asked listeners to cite examples of customer service that appalled or delighted them.

To few people's surprise, the telecoms came off badly. 'Communications company' is a splendid example of an oxymoron that is fast becoming a national joke, mostly thanks to the technology -- developed by these very companies -- which practically guarantees that the one thing you will not be able to do is communicate with them.

If you have a customer service story, painful or positive, that you would like to share, we'd love to hear from you. Send us an email at withwrinkles@hotmail.com or write to us at 6111 Main St., Stouffville L4A3R4.

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