



Residents of Mount Albert meet to discuss proposed new LCBO outlet.

Photo: OPSEU files

'Keep It Public' campaign sweeps through Mount Albert

by Greg Hamara


OPSEU liquor board employees took their "Keep It Public" campaign to the small community of Mount Albert this year in a bid to have the provincial government replace the "agency store" with a real LCBO store.

It was the first time Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) members had organized a campaign directed at a specific community. In the case of Mount Albert, located 10 km east of Newmarket, the privately run agency store does more than \$3 million in annual sales, with 10 per cent of that going back to the Nova Scotia-based Sobeys Corp. as its commission for operating the outlet. The province is also losing a half a million dollars in annual profits to the foreign-owned Beer Store from this location, part of the \$16 million it loses annually by operating agency stores instead of real LCBOs.

Before going public with the campaign, LBED did its homework. It hired Strategic Communications Inc. to conduct a public opinion survey of Mount Albert residents. The results showed that more than two out of three of those polled favoured replacing the agency store kiosk with a real LCBO outlet.

A public meeting was organized, attended by more than 80 residents, where LBED put forward its case for replacing the agency store when its contract with the LCBO ended in late 2009.

LBED chair Vanda Klumper also led a delegation to East Gwillimbury town council, where she asked members to pass a motion asking Queen's Park to direct the LCBO to replace the agency store. The motion was initially greeted with support but pressure from Sobeys' management led council to turn it down.

"Keep It Public" committee chair Laurie Miller vows that the campaign is continuing. "We learned some valuable lessons from the Mount Albert campaign — lessons that will help us in that town and in future agency store campaigns. Communities should have a real LCBO outlet. We've only just begun!" said Miller. 



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