

Sobeys to close for four months, 104 employees impacted

By Brock Weir

Aurora's Sobeys store will close for four months at the end of August for renovations.

While the grocery store on Bayview Avenue at Hollidge Boulevard is due to re-open in January 2014, 104 employees will be impacted by the decision, according to the grocery company.

Regular grocery shoppers may have noticed the rapidly depleting stock on store shelves over the last few weeks, but the company promises a "bigger and better" Sobeys and "a new look to make your shopping experience even better."

If the result is a better shopping experience for customers, the road to get there will provide some challenges for employees and residents depending on their service.

"We announced last month to our staff that we will be temporarily closing the store for major renovations effective August 31 until January 2014," says Sarah Stover, Communications Manager for Sobeys Ontario. "The decision to close our Aurora location for such a long period of time was not made lightly and substantial consideration was given to the impact on employees, customers and the community."

"As a result of the temporary closure, 104 employees - 23 full-time and 81 part-time - will be impacted. Some employees have received offers of employment in comparable jobs within our store network, whereas others have been notified of a temporary lay-off."

All employees on temporary lay-off will be returning for orientation in December, she notes. Sobeys stores in Richmond Hill and Bradford will remain open.

"Sobeys continues to be committed to serving the grocery needs of the Aurora community and we look forward to welcoming customers to our newly renovated store," she says.

Two years ago, the Aurora Sobeys store stepped up to the plate providing grocery services to seniors living west of Yonge Street who were hit by the closure of Foodland at St. Andrew's Plaza. In a deal hammered out between the management of the store and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees, the store provided ways for seniors to easily get to the store to do their own grocery shopping.

Ms. Stover was unable to confirm whether provisions have been made for these residents during the renovations.

"The special accommodations that Sobeys made for seniors has been appreciated and I am hopeful these arrangements will be continued in January," says Mr. Klees. "I have placed a call to manager Andrew McFadden and hope to confirm that this will be the case."

"In the meantime, I will pursue interim arrangements with organizations such as CHATS (Community and Home Assistance to Seniors) to ensure that seniors who have been depending on Sobeys' service are looked after."