



## 400 Oshawa workers blindsided by company's sudden closure

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Rallies are planned for Monday as former IQT Solutions workers in Oshawa demand answers for why they're suddenly jobless and denied their final paycheques or vacation and severance pay.

On Friday, the American-based call centre abruptly declared bankruptcy in Canada, immediately terminating 400 full-time jobs in Oshawa, 375 full-time jobs in Laval, Que. and 100 full-time jobs in Trois-Rivieres, Que.

"It's very shabbily done," Clyde Haggart, who lost his job as Oshawa site director with the shutdown, said on Sunday.

Haggart said he got a phone call from New York at the same time he was wondering why there was no money available to pay employees on Friday. "We were supposed to have payroll in the night before."

Haggart said he's also suddenly unemployed, after moving to Oshawa in 2010 to run the centre.

"I was totally rocked," Haggart said. "I had no idea."

"Without warning, they left us flat broke, locked out, and jobless," former Oshawa worker Gregg Davis, 30, told the *Toronto Star*.

The full-time workers averaged about \$13 an hour. They were told when they showed up for their regular shifts on Friday that the company was bankrupt and that they wouldn't receive their final paycheques, severance pay or vacation pay.

They were also told to immediately gather their personal belongings and leave the premises.

Davis said he and fellow workers plan to rally at the Midtown Mall on 200 John St. W. in Oshawa on Monday morning, and then head to the Durham Region Labour Council.

The Canadian job cuts come weeks after IQT Solutions announced they were opening a call centre in the corporation's headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, after receiving a city job-creation grant of up to \$1.6 million (U.S.) there.

IQT officials could not be reached for comment on Sunday.

Haggart said he suspects the American expansion is linked to the sudden Canadian shutdown, and he plans to call the governor's office in Tennessee and mayor's office in Nashville to tell them what kind of corporate citizenship they can expect from IQT.

"It's just sickening," Haggart said. "I don't appreciate the position they've put me in."

The company provides technical support and client services for other businesses, notably in the communications technology sector. It had operated three centres in Canada before Friday.

Davis said he doesn't understand how IQT can get away with the sudden job cuts.

Workers at the Trois-Rivieres centre were attempting to set up a union before the closure.

IQT purchased the Durham Contact Centre from Durham College in 2009 and provided customer service for Bell Canada.

The corporation held a job fair in Durham two years ago, which was packed with candidates seeking work.

Haggart said he moved to Oshawa a little over a year ago for his job, and now he hopes prospective employers will look favourably towards his former staff.

"We have 400 very talented people that are customer-service oriented, with tech savvy," Haggart said. "Any employer who hires them can't go wrong."

John Cartwright, president of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, said the sudden move by IQT highlights weaknesses in Canadian bankruptcy laws and the dangers of free trade.

Cartwright said it reminded him of how Progressive Moulded Products of Vaughan suddenly declared bankruptcy and shut its doors in July 2008, costing 2,400 workers their jobs.

The non-union company, which was once Vaughan's largest employer, shut down without paying workers severance or termination pay.

"It's all the same nasty thing," Cartwright said.

