

FROM PAGE A1
That may help explain why London unemployment is considerably higher than in Kitchener-Waterloo (6.2%), Hamilton (6.9%) and Windsor (8.1%). And Guelph's unemployment rate has plunged to 4.7%.

Not surprisingly, the new branch of the London Employment Help Centre on High-bury Ave. has been hopping since it opened this year, just

as unemployment in the area started to climb.
As many as 80 people use the centre daily and most are keenly aware London is one of Canada's worst job markets, program manager Tom Crouch said.

"The media is doing a pretty good job of publicizing that," he said.

Porter said the manufacturing sector showed signs of recovery last month.

He said the London area manufacturing sector is closely tied to the American market, so London could see some relief if U.S. President Barack Obama is able to steer a \$450 billion US stimulus package through Congress.

"London should be cheering for it. It would give the U.S. economy a short-term boost. But it's highly debatable that it will be passed," Porter said.

and locally."
The Hudak Tories have been targeting pocketbook issues such as rising energy costs and Anderson said that will appeal to voters who are retired or have secure jobs.

But he said the job creation plans laid out by the Liberals will play to anyone worried about job security.

"It's nice to have relief on home heating but if you don't have a

property he leases and has spent \$1.5 million renovating.
City chief administrative officer Jeff Fielding said this week he planned to speak with Henderson about the e-mail the councillor sent him on the fate of the Western Fair Imax building.

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"I will be following up with Dale Henderson about the request to clarify what individual and council interests are."

Henderson rejects outright any criticisms of the e-mail.

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city council and I voted on it," he said. "It's no conflict."

Henderson has said he's set next month to leave the West-end Fair-owned building, a former Imax theatre he's turned into the London City Music Theatre.

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He says he's seeking someone to potentially "take (buy) me out"

MUNICIPAL POLITICS: Ward 9 Coun. Dale Henderson urged city hall to act to save a potentially doomed property he leases and has spent \$1.5 million renovating

Passion or conflict? Rookie councillor under fire

applauds Henderson's "passion for London," other councillors pointedly, if quietly, criticize him, especially the tough-to-follow comments he makes in debates.

Henderson says he's not surprised by the criticism.

"I'm not a politician. I consider myself a statesman — I will tell the truth, but you may not want to hear the truth," he said.

As for his public comments during debates — which several city hall veterans say are often heard to understand — Henderson admits he's "working on that."

"I have to be careful and come up with one idea at a time."

patrick.maloney@summedia.ca

Henderson, 65, a businessperson elected to council last year. The e-mail to Fielding, for example, was obtained by *The Free Press* from Henderson himself, who sent it along as information for a story on the Music Theatre's fate.

Even as a misunderstanding, it plays into growing frustration from some councillors and observers over Henderson's performance so far on council.

One blogger, citing Henderson's call for council to take over the library board, suggested future candidates "pass some kind of civics competency test."

While Coun. Bud Polhill

and continue using the site as a live arts venue.
If not, he says, he'll be out in October and have an auction of his assets such as a light-wiring system and chandeliers.

In his e-mail, Henderson asked Fielding to "request an appraisal by the city to value the assets that are about to be shipped to Toronto for auction."

Asked to characterize the request, Fielding said: "I'm going to say it is unusual."

But was the e-mail to Fielding really an attempt to influence the city about a personal interest?

Some wonder if that sensitive boundary is simply unclear to

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Weekly Question

Will you be attending the Western Fair?

Yes

Yeah, right.

The right to know and say no

TODAY'S BLOG #513: *City council makes decisions on our behalf. Does it have a responsibility to share some of that power with us? Or do we have a responsibility to pay more attention when decisions are being made?*

Friday, Sept. 9, 2011 – London

When citizens elect or appoint people to take on the responsibility of making the decisions of government, to what extent should we expect they will involve us in the process?

The range of answers might be in direct proportion to the how personally affected one is by the decision. The continuing fuss being made by residents of Glanworth about the possible loss of their little library is but one illustration of an age-old issue.

The question, though, is a both serious and divisive. A citizen task force is currently grappling with it, trying to author a new public engagement policy for city council and its various boards and commissions, one of which is the London Public Library.

Some – this would include Ward 14 councillor Sandy White and many Glanworthians – think they've been done a dirty in the way the public library board handled the recent decision.

It does seem a little callous, certainly the way they tell it: A summer meeting, a quiet little item on the published agenda, no advance notice to those directly affected. But that's no worse really than the way many other decisions by city council and the various civic boards and commissions are made. Meetings are listed on an annual calendar, agendas are published in advance and citizens are expected to pay attention.

