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Mosque spotlight shines on Newmarket municipal offices at noon today

PROTESTERS 'COMING FOR ANSWERS'

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Reporter

Controversy continues to surround Newmarket's new mosque.

Newmarket's municipal offices will be targeted at noon today by the Jewish Defence League, a Toronto-area group protesting Zafar Bangash's involvement with the town's first mosque.

Insisting the Islamic Society of York Region president supports "hate and terror," added national Jewish Defence League president Meir Weinstein is in town to ask questions.

"Do the other members of this mosque agree with Mr. Bangash's political views?" Mr. Weinstein said.

"If this mosque has absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Bangash, then there's no issue. We want this cleared up. We're coming for answers. We're picketing the mayor's office."

Mosque representatives, however, are now insisting Mr. Bangash will not be involved in the day-to-day operations of the mosque, spokesperson Ansar Ahmed said, who questioned why groups from out-of-town are getting involved.

"Unlike Mr. Weinstein, I live in Newmarket," Mr. Ahmed said. "This has been my town for a dozen years. I live here, am raising a family here. I have a vested interest in helping our town to heal and to begin to build bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims. I am not sure what Mr. Weinstein's motivation is."

Mr. Weinstein engineered a meeting Sunday, an open forum he dubs Concerned Citizens Against Terror, at the Best Western Hotel in Newmarket.

Also involved is Ron Banerjee, director of the Hindu Conference of Canada, one of the speakers at Sunday's meeting.

"Hindus across York Region have been calling me," the Toronto resident said.

"The Islamic Society of York Region has a radical leader in Mr. Bangash. His views are repulsive and unacceptable in a democracy like Canada.

"Anyone with half a brain could figure out that if the people involved in the mosque respect Mr. Bangash, they share his ideology," even if he is not the imam, Mr. Banerjee said.

Town officials are concerned

SUITING UP FOR A LONG NIGHT

STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Aurora Relay For Life honorary survivor Doug Bowers, Aurora honorary chairperson Mayor Phyllis Morris, Newmarket honorary