

Former CAO's home torched

By JOHN STEWART
Staff

Former Mississauga City Manager Doug Lychak says he's become the "lightning rod" for union discontent with municipal reforms he's made in Surrey, British Columbia.

Speaking from his office in Surrey, Lychak told *The News* he is operating in a completely different atmosphere in Surrey than he did in Mississauga.

That became obvious last week, when Lychak's home was the target of arsonists, who caused \$100,000 damage. Lychak and his family escaped unhurt from the 5 a.m. blaze.

"I won't speculate on this incident, but the RCMP says it was definitely

arson," Lychak said.

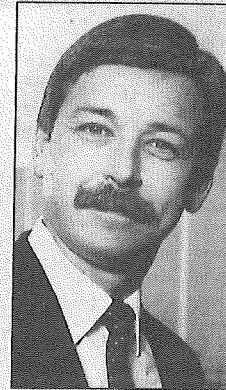
"I will say I've been the ongoing target of nasty, abusive phone calls to me and my family, hate mail and battles of one sort or another related to my home and property."

A divided council and a heavily unionized staff have led to a very "confrontational" style of politics in Surrey, a fast-growing suburb of Vancouver.

Since council there "is not able to provide the vision or leadership," Lychak says it's fallen to him by default to take the leadership role in making changes.

"The atmosphere here is much, much more polarized," says Lychak.

His reform agenda came to a head last year when there was a bitter five-



LYCHAK

week strike by municipal employees.

The manager says the union had much more control of the administration in the past than it should have.

"They were used to getting their way," he says, "and they weren't used to me or my style."

During the strike, radio and TV ads by the union specifically singled out Lychak for criticism.

Lychak says he may not move back to his former home and plans to increase security for his family and change his lifestyle to some degree.

He's not planning to change jobs, however. "I've never walked away from a challenge in my life," says the former Credit Reserve resident staunchly.

He calls it a sad commentary when disagreements over public policies aren't settled by debate and discussion, but rather are "taken to the extreme" by people who don't agree with decisions that have been made.