

'They're trying to force me to close': Contractor appealing after business licence revoked

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The embattled business owner has been the focal point of a number of Sudburians who say they were bilked out of thousands of dollars for home improvement projects contracted by Murray and EcoLife that have not yet been completed.

During an [April 10 interview with Sudbury.com](#), Murray said he plans to make good on his contracts and finish the work for clients that had incomplete jobs at their homes.

That same day, Greater Sudbury revoked Murray's business licence, forbidding him from doing any work in the city, and leaving a number of clients in limbo.

"In order to operate a business in the City of Greater Sudbury, you must be in possession of a valid business license," said city spokesperson Shannon Dowling. "When somebody's business licence is revoked or suspended, they would find out when it (comes) into effect."

Information on the exact time of the day April 10 that Murray found out his licence was revoked was not available, so it's unclear if Murray was promising to complete outstanding work for his clients when he was no longer permitted to conduct business in the city.

When a company's business licence is revoked, the rules are clear: the business must stop operating. In Murray's case, he is not allowed to work on any jobs, even if they had been started before his licence was revoked.

In a phone interview Wednesday afternoon, Murray said he is appealing the city's decision, and said he should find out if his appeal was successful by June 5. Murray said he has asked for the process to be expedited so he can get to the jobs he has promised to complete.

The EcoLife owner has reached out to some of his clients who are waiting, but says he's hit some snares and feels there is some outside interference. He's now accusing the police of telling clients to cut off contact with him.

"The police are interfering right now," Murray said. "There's a couple of clients that I was scheduled to do installations and they were on my side and now they're not on my side any more."



One of the clients contacted by Murray reached out to Sudbury.com, but wished to remain anonymous to avoid any further interaction with Murray.

The client says they were in contact with non-bank lender [SNAP Financial, who cut ties with Murray and EcoLife in November 2018](#). The client said that SNAP Financial advised that they cease communication with Murray.

"I had been contacting Dave every month asking where my windows were," said the EcoLife client who is still awaiting the completion of a window installation that was contracted last summer.

"He's reaching out to people now offering to do their jobs, saying he's got guys that can do the work for him."

Under city bylaws, despite having his business licence revoked, Murray is allowed to reach out to other contractors to complete jobs. Murray may not solicit business or take payments for the jobs that are completed.

"On the surface, you can't do the business or solicit the work, I would take the opinion that he has the best intentions of trying to get the work done, but I'm making the assumption that he's not doing so for free," said Brendan Adair, manager of security and bylaw at the city of Greater Sudbury.

"If he's subcontracting, there's going to be some kind of fee involved and just the fact that he's calling (a client) would be viewed as soliciting work."

By definition, Murray would be described as a "building renovator" with respect to his business licence, which includes any person in the business of altering, repairing, or renovating structures and includes any person who solicits for such work, or in any way advertises or holds themselves out to the public for doing building renovations.

In other words, Murray is not allowed to contact clients directly to arrange for work to be completed, nor is he allowed to advertise himself as a building renovator while he is without a valid business licence.

"I would say in general terms if someone was doing that, it could be in violation of the bylaw," said Adair.

The appeal process for business owners whose licenses have been revoked is, in essence, a less formal court proceeding. Attending the hearing will be a municipal bylaw enforcement officer, the applicant (Murray), witnesses, and any other individuals who have a legitimate interest in the proceedings.

Appeals are made to the hearing committee, which may ask questions of the participants in order to clarify the evidence given during the appeal process.

Murray said Wednesday he is hoping to have his hearing date bumped up, and says that while he can understand the city has a duty to protect citizens, he feels the decision to revoke his business licence may be doing more harm than good.

"Some of the clients want to advocate for me against the city, to let me please finish the jobs, and the city won't let me do that," said Murray. "I understand that (the city) is trying to help protect the people,

but they're also hurting the ones that are not complaining, the ones that want to get their jobs done, and the clients I've had over the last 10 years. I can't even do service calls."

Murray pointed to a particular client that reached out to him about a roofing job that had been done by his company a number of years ago, and the roof had become leaky. Due to the fact that he has no business license, Murray can't take a service call to assess and fix the leaky roof.

"It seems like they're trying to force me to close down," said Murray. "I'm doing everything possible, there might be other avenues I can take by hiring other companies to finish the jobs for us, that's been brought to the table. I want to do right by my clients, but it feels like there's barriers they're putting up against me."

Murray approached the city to question who had issued the complaints that led to his licence being revoked, but the city turned him away and would not provide any names.

"I went through Freedom of Information, and they were going to block it, so I can't even address my accusers or try to make it right with them," said Murray.

"To me, if a client has a complaint with something that's valid, they would want to rectify it. Given that opportunity I would do that, but I feel like I'm not getting that opportunity."

In truth, Murray does have the opportunity to make good with clients whose work has not been completed, but without a business licence it must be done within the confines of the bylaw, which means he can't contact his clients directly to solicit work, or accept payment in a direct manner.

But it appears he can approach other contractors to finish jobs, as long as it's that contractor who is contacting Murray's clients and accepting the payments.

In the case of the client who spoke with Sudbury.com, they would just as soon have no further dealings with Murray, and is leaning on the support of others who are in the same boat.

"I would encourage anyone who feels the way I do to reach out for support, I know what they're feeling," said the EcoLife client.

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