

Firm 'caught in middle' of Trinity lock change



DAVID BEBEE WATERLOO REGION RECORD

Security company gets hundreds of new five-star ratings in response to a campaign of negative reviews

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WATERLOO REGION — Some people frustrated over the court's decision to have the locks changed at Trinity Bible Chapel over the weekend have directed their anger toward a local lock and security company's online reviews page.

Waterloo-based G&A Lock and Security received more than two dozen one-star reviews on Sunday after the company locked up the church at the province's request. The Ministry of the Attorney General approached the company after Justice John Krawchenko found the Woolwich Township church to be in

contempt of prior court orders and ordered the building to be locked for one week.

"I believe people needed to express their emotions and frustrations with the church being locked. And given we were the ones that did the locking, made us the target," said Steve Uhrig, operations manager of G&A.

"It's never easy to lock down a building regardless of the circumstances," he wrote in an email response. "Being in the lock and security business, we accept that we will be put in uncomfortable situations from time to time."

The cluster of negative reviews came as a surprise to Rob Dip-

pell, president of William Knell & Co. Ltd., parent company to G&A. At first glance, it caused him to panic a little because all he could see were negatives.

But he didn't have to wait long before the wider community saw what was going on and responded with their own five-star reviews. Before the weekend, the G&A location in Waterloo had around 130 reviews. By Monday afternoon, the company had more than 400, with the overwhelming majority being five stars.

"It's been gratifying to know that people are paying attention

Wayne Uhrig works on buffing some freshly cut keys at G&A Lock and Security. The business has been subject to negative reviews online after they were chosen to place locks on Trinity Bible Chapel.

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and will speak up when they see something going wrong," he said. The new reviews have now brought the company's rating even higher than it was a week ago. Some of those who wrote negative reviews have since removed them, Dippell said. The company won't be removing any of the positive or negative reviews. They will live online.

Had the community not rallied in response, it would have been a hit to G&A's online reputation. Dippell said this wouldn't have killed the company — it's been in business for 54 years and is well-established. But he imagines if this happened to other types of businesses, it could be very damaging.

"If this type of online reputation bombing happened to a full retail business (for example), it could kill companies, and I find that worrisome."

The pace of how fast these reviews came in — both positive and negative — was dizzying, he said. It's not the first time G&A has been approached to secure a building on the strength of a court order. Dippell said whenever this happens, there are generally two opposing sides to the situation, so at least one party will be angry if locks are changed or not.

"It's a no-win situation, really. We're just caught in the middle," he said.

"I have empathy for those who are angry with us right now. I know that it's a frustrating time. I know that it feels like an infringement of rights, but that's not something that we're involved in.

"It isn't a reflection of our values that we locked this premises. It's a reflection of us doing our job to the best of our ability."

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