

Low cost housing need in York urgent

NEWMARKET — "There remains an urgent need in York Region for both low-cost rental accommodation and short-term transient accommodation particularly for the handicapped, probationers, and single parents with children. There appears to be no immediate plan to rectify the situation." This is one of the observations tabled

at the March 31 regional council meeting by the Emergency Housing Committee, a volunteer citizen group. To help solve the need for emergency short-term accommodation in the region, the committee has established a voluntary housing registry to coordinate volunteer homeowners, agencies, and people in need.

According to the committee report, efforts have met with a good deal of success, though there is much work yet to be done: — those who require emergency housing usually require other health and social services. — many situations brought forward as emergency housing situations are in

fact personal crisis requiring support services as well as re-location. — over 50 per cent of those requiring emergency housing are either recipients of, or are eligible to receive government financial assistance. — lack of knowledge and understanding regarding landlord-tenant rights remains a significant factor.

— the length of stay in emergency homes seems considerably longer than would be constituted by an emergency. — the effectiveness of the emergency housing registry would be considerably improved if administered from one location. — the problem of securing first and last months' rent for those on limited

incomes, general welfare assistance and family benefits remains a major obstacle. Consequently, the committee recommended a full-time housing counsellor, available through one of the participating agencies, to intervene and address these situations effectively.

Schiller criticizes engineering spending

NEWMARKET — At the March 31 regional council meeting, Richmond Hill Mayor David Schiller demanded to know by what authority the regional engineering department overspent its budget, in some cases substantially. Commissioner of Engineering Bob Hodgson explained that, in all cases where contract amounts were to be exceeded, approval had been given by council. He asked Mayor Schiller to be more explicit. Schiller replied that roadways had been budgeted at \$2,487,000 with \$2,567,000 actually spent; that administration, budgeted at \$312,400, had spent \$333,000; and that special projects budgeted at \$20,000 had actually cost \$48,800. "If each department overspent in this manner," said Schiller, "the region would enter the year with a deficit. That's no way to run things." The commissioner of engineering said a harsh winter escalated road costs, administration budget figures were set before the finalization of some wage figures, and all special projects were awarded by tender, with the approval of council.

The net amount of overspending was \$24,000. "We receive tenders by bulk quantity," said Schiller, "but not as to the absolute amount spent by this department." **Markham road repairs** Schiller then asked the commissioner to "kindly repair" Markham Road from Yonge to Bayview. "This is one of the most heavily used roads, and one of the roads in the worst condition," said Schiller. Commissioner Hodgson said the road had a concrete base, meaning that the only correction possible is complete reconstruction. "We're doing our best to patch it," he said.

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