



Biologist Patricia Mohr gathers water samples from a drainage culvert at a 14th Ave. retention pond during recent water testing there as part of Save the Rouge Valley System's testing program. The water showed slightly higher than normal chemical contents. At right is group chairman, Jim Robb.



— Bruce Etheridge

Environmental group tests the waters

By BRUCE ETHERIDGE
A spot water test conducted by an environmental group at a storm-sewer retention pond on 14th Ave. and Birchmount Rd. last Wednesday revealed a slightly higher than normal chemical content in the water.
Patrica Mohr, an environmental biologist who conducted the preliminary testing for Save the Rouge Valley System (SRVS), said the higher levels may simply be "the result of road salt runoff."
The group plans to begin regular water quality testing in Markham this summer.
While the environmental test

kit Miss Mohr used cannot identify specific elements or toxins, it can spot the presence of chemicals or metals by measuring the conductivity of the water.
Contamination allows electrical current to pass through the water more easily.
Jim Robb, SRVS vice-chairman, says the group plans to do extensive testing and analyses at potential "problem spots" along the storm-sewer drainage system and at major Rouge River tributaries in Markham.
Two weeks ago, CIP Containers Ltd. on Bullock Dr. was fined \$3,000 in Newmarket Court for spilling purple ink and paraffin

wax into a tributary.
The Ministry of Environment, however, determined the waste was non-toxic to plant or aquatic life.
Although the SRVS has its roots in Scarborough, Mr. Robb is hoping to establish a chapter of the watchdog group in Markham.
Because tributaries and the headwaters of the Rouge River are located in the Markham area, Mr. Robb said the "fate of the river is in Markham's hands."
He said SRVS is "very concerned about the direction Markham's development is taking because it will have the greatest effect on water quality in the

Rouge River."
He hopes residents and Markham Council will "avoid repeating Scarborough's mistakes" in its planning program.
Mr. Robb, who has a science degree in forestry, says Markham's Official Plan Review — he cited the Mount Joy industrial proposal as an example — seems to be following Scarborough in "trying to develop all available land and fill in the green spaces in Markham."
But he said if Markham built a series of retention ponds — with dams or water gates — rather than the concrete storm sewer channels along its watercourses it would help reduce pollution, flood-

ing and erosion problems and cost less.
A recent study published in the Toronto Star stated that the major concern of 93 per cent of Ontario residents is environmental issues.
And according to the study, people want the provincial government to take a more active role in solving the problems.
The SRVS has approximately 300 members but only a few from this area. Mr. Robb is looking for new members to establish a chapter or affiliated group in Markham. He can be reached at 757-5750. The Save the Rouge Foundation can be contacted at 283-4286.

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