

United Way tops its goal in extended campaign

MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

York Region's United Way is way over the top.

The area's charity umbrella organization went beyond its own expectations and raised \$3.5 million for its local agencies.

That's a record-breaking fall campaign — and nine per cent more than the United Way's target of \$3.2 million.

"I expected success and I'm thrilled we had success," campaign chair Mark Durst said yesterday afternoon.

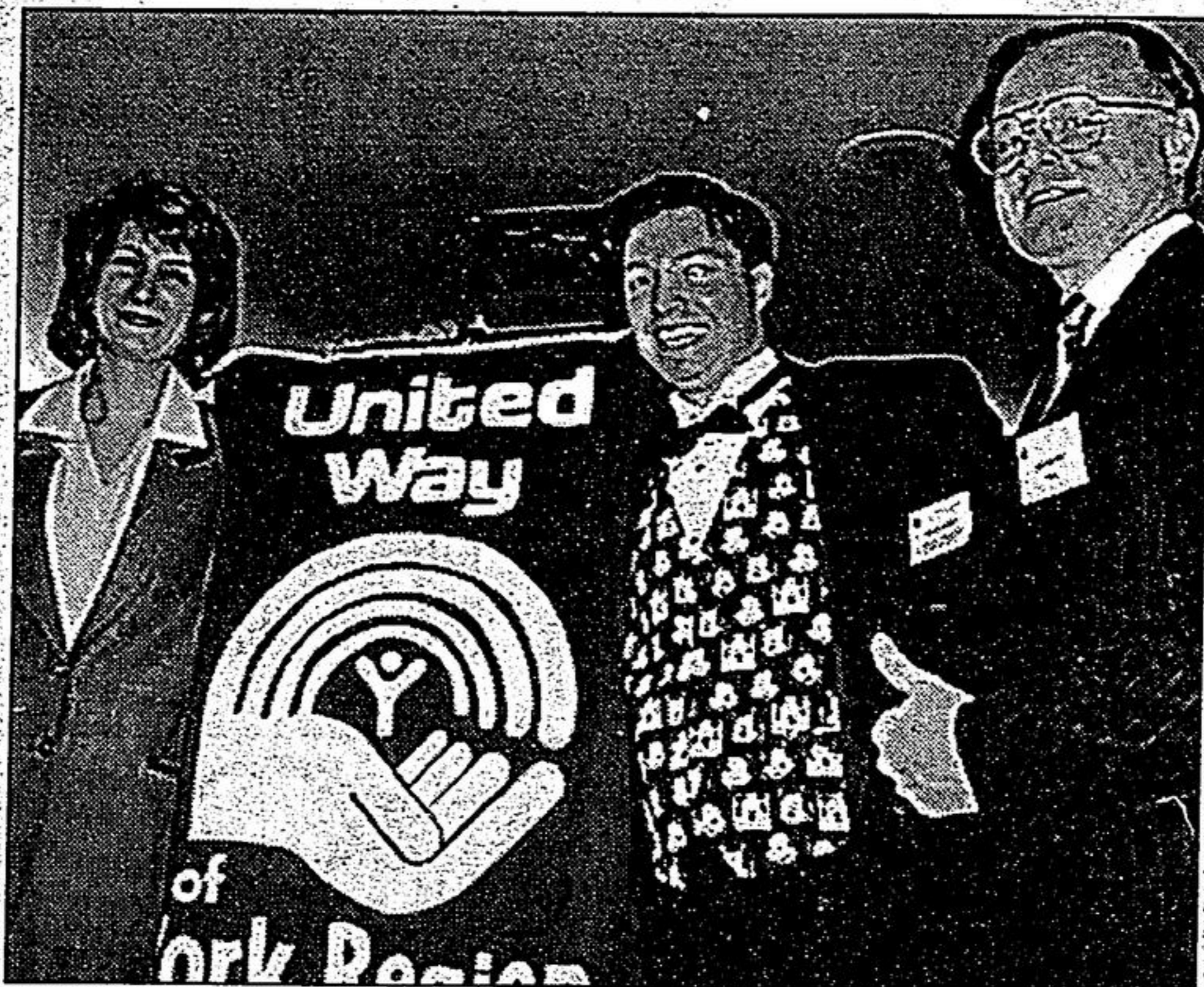
The campaign, extended into December, finished with a final fundraiser at a Markham hotel for the York Technology Association.

It was an appropriate closing event, campaign organizers said, because local high-tech companies increased their contributions this year by a staggering 62 per cent.

It's a sign the industry is maturing, said Durst, himself the president of a Thornhill technology firm, Patriot Computer Corporation.

The community's needs are growing, and the fundraising campaign helped the private sector understand what they are, he said.

"It's not a requirement to help needy people; it's not an obligation," added Durst.



SMILES OF SUCCESS: From left, United Way of York Region executive director Wyn Chivers, Mark Durst, chair of the 1997 campaign, and board chair Don Brown celebrate this year's fundraising drive surpassing its goal.

Photo by MIKE ADLER

"It's something you should want to do."

The United Way provides an avenue to help and the organization keeps an eye on future needs, he said.

Durst said the recent mail strike didn't stop individual residents from donating and the region's teachers gave, in spite of the financial strain they faced from strikes: "They actually did come through this year, even with all that stress they still gave."

Volunteers will decide what to do with the extra money, said

Wyn Chivers, the United Way's executive director.

New community projects which have been proposed include volunteer help for families facing a terminal illness, job training for single mothers and support for children who have experienced violence at home.

Part of the money could be used to increase support to the group's underfunded regular agencies, said Chivers.

Last year, the United Way raised just over \$3 million in another extended campaign.

Childcare rebates will be faster, but less, for RC parents

MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

their local MPP.

If the law doesn't permit a school board to do something, it can't do it, Sabo said, adding teachers' salaries and benefits the board saved during its two-week legal strike all go to a reserve controlled by the province.

Local Catholic parents are simply not going to get as much in provincial "fairness payments" as their neighbours with children in public school.

And there's nothing York Region's separate school board can do now to change that, board officials stressed this week.

Parents of children under 14 or special needs children can claim \$40 a day

to get back what they spent on childcare during the Ontario teachers' strike.

But the Fairness for Parents and Employees Act singles out the York Catholic board, saying its parents can't claim costs for the second week of province-wide disruption, because the board's teachers were then on legal strike.

The board objected before the act was passed, arguing its ratepayers wouldn't get a fair deal.

But now that the payback measure is law, officials say, some parents are refusing to accept that the board can't give them money for the second week on its own.

"They think it's just our money," said John Sabo, the board's finance director.

"We're not independent bodies that can do with it what we want."

On Tuesday, Catholic chair Tina Molinari said the board has done as much as it can and people should bring their complaints to

Separate school parents upset they can't claim full \$400 childcare rebate: 'They think it's just our money, complains John Sabo, board's finance director.'

Both area school boards have made claim forms, which must be filed by Jan. 16, available to parents.

York separate school parents were given a modified form with a \$200 maximum claim.

But the separate school parents may get their money sooner, with perhaps all cheques arriving by the end of January.

The public board, with more claims to process and a longer claim period, won't be ready to release the money until mid-February.

"We wish we could do it sooner, but we're doing our best," said public board superintendent Bob Harper.

The Ministry of Education and Training has promised to help cover the processing costs, officials say, making it unlikely the boards will lose money on the claims.

The public board saved about \$13 million in unpaid teacher salaries, but expects the claims and the costs of processing them — around \$10 a cheque — could total \$14 million, Harper said.

But Sabo and Harper also said any savings left over would probably go to the province.

RC board bids farewell to trustees

MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

Stouffville Catholic trustee Elizabeth Crowe became vice-chair of a new York Region separate school board this week, moments after the old board faded into history.

"The past few years have been a turbulent and complex time," chair Tina Molinari told the new board's first meeting Tuesday night. "The next few years bring uncertainty and even hope to Catholic school boards."

Earlier, Molinari said the old board "always put students first" while bringing its deficit down from \$32 million to \$5 million.

Crowe, a veteran who now represents Stouffville, Aurora and King, was unopposed for vice-chair.

The new board, serving the



ELIZABETH CROWE

Photo by MIKE ADLER

same area and temporarily known as Catholic District School Board No. 42, made Molinari its first chair.

Outgoing trustee Sean Pearce, who represented Stouffville as well as East Gwillimbury and

Georgina, and spoke for the board on its efficiency-finding joint consortium with the public board, said fellow trustees had earned his respect.

But Pearce, one of the youngest trustees the previous board ever had, told trustees of the new board they face a great challenge.

"I challenge the new trustees to affirm Catholic education in York Region and not be swept up by restructuring," he said.

Pearce, who lit candles during the board's liturgy for Advent as a symbolic sign of joy, later added that Catholic classrooms in the region "didn't suffer as much as people expected" during the three deficit-cutting years of his term.

Peter Bernotas, French-language trustee for Stouffville, also retired. The former board's French schools will become part of a new francophone separate board.

Trial seems without end, says family

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lawyers put their heads together and determined, much to Caroline's and her mom's surprise and disappointment, that the trial would resume on Dec. 15 — two years and six months from the time of the accident.

"We returned this week," said Carr. "We were all psyched up for the trial to go on. And, now this. It seems never ending. It hangs on and on. We thought we'd have this behind us before Christmas. But that's not the case."

If, during the hearing, the charges against Lam are not dropped, the trial will continue right away, said Carr.

Until then, the Rea and Carr families will try to enjoy Christmas. "Yes, it is difficult," admitted Carr.

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