

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS: Provincial grant a 'good-faith gesture'

Markham gets \$83,000 boost for recycling

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STAFF WRITER

Markham will see an \$83,000 boost to its curbside recycling program by month's end — its share of a provincial grant aimed at improving Ontario's waste diversion rates.

As part of a province-wide initiative to hold industry more responsible for the disposal of its products, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario has chipped in \$4 million to municipalities across Ontario — the estimated share of LCBO products in total glass collected.

Of the \$4-million grant, \$3 million is paid to municipalities based on the amount of glass collected. But a further 25 per cent is reward based — going to municipalities with strong, efficient recycling systems.

Markham collected the additional

funding because of its successful program, one that includes innovative ideas, solid community participation and on-going education, said Peter Veiga, programs co-ordinator in the town's waste management department.

Markham has one of the highest diversion rates in the province — about 38 per cent.

Veiga explained said when recycling first began, many industries producing recyclables paid start-up costs or contributed to the program in some way.

But over time, many of those grants dried up. The province is responding to concerns from municipalities that recycling is expensive and the cost should not be borne entirely by property taxpayers.

"Basically, it's a good-faith gesture

that the province is serious and on track, that they're heading in the right direction," Veiga said.

The plan was announced by Environment Minister Norm Sterling last fall. It calls for food, beverage and consumer product industries as well as newspapers and the LCBO to contribute to the cost of municipal recycling programs.

Recycling is still cheaper than disposal at an average cost of \$14 a household per year. The province still hopes to eventually meet its goal of 50 per cent diversion — though it won't happen by 2000 as planned.

As well, Sterling is calling for the formation of a province-wide waste diversion organization, aimed at giving municipalities the tools they need to increase diversion and reduce costs.

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