

COMMUNICATION: Bell expands local calling borders in Thornhill, Markham, Stouffville

Some areas get break on long distance calls

BY PATRICK CASEY & JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writers

York Region residents caught a break Tuesday when Bell Canada announced changes to its local calling area throughout greater Toronto.

Monthly long distance charges will soon fall for residents in Woodbridge, Kleinburg, Thornhill, Markham, Richmond Hill, Stouffville and Aurora after Bell completes an investment of \$3.1 million in the Toronto area to enable customers to make local calls to more places.

More than 50 communities in the GTA will benefit from the elimination of long distance telephone charges.

The move is part of Bell's \$200-million total investment to improve local service throughout Ontario and Quebec by 2000, with the upgrades expanding local calling areas for 6.8 million customers in 642 different exchanges.

The changes take effect Oct. 22.

It's a "great day" for business across the GTA, said Helene Johnson, president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce.

"The less you have to pay for telephone service, the more you can put into business development."

Officials of the York-Durham Heritage Railway are cheering — the tourist train has an Uxbridge telephone number and consequently, it was often a long distance call to get information.

The less you have to pay for telephone service, the more you can put into business development.

"Now that long distance charges have been eliminated for Uxbridge, it will enable the railway to attract more business, especially from Toronto," said Johnson.

Being able to call Uxbridge toll free is a plus for everyone.

"It's about time," Johnson added. "It was ridiculous. Stouffville could call Toronto free of charge but not Uxbridge. This puts things in the proper perspective. With this in place, I can call my Uxbridge grandchildren without being charged," said Johnson.

According to Bell Canada spokesperson Don Hogarth, the changes are a direct response from communities telling Bell that improved telecommunications will help attract new businesses to their areas.

"This is something that customers like. In the 905 area around Toronto, we know from talking with people where their (long distance) calls are and where their local calls are," said Hogarth yesterday.

This initiative was announced at the end of 1997 and we have been rolling it out since then. This is not a response to the current competitive situation, although we are as keen as possible to offer the best solutions for our customers. It's all part of the equation.

Some of the area changes where residents and businesses will be able to call each other without a long distance charge include:

- Woodbridge to Beeton, Tottenham and Schomberg
 - Kleinburg to Beeton, Schomberg and Tottenham
 - Aurora to Richmond Hill and Thornhill
 - Thornhill to Aurora
 - Richmond Hill to Aurora
 - Markham to Uxbridge
 - Stouffville to Uxbridge
- Bell is also working to make single-

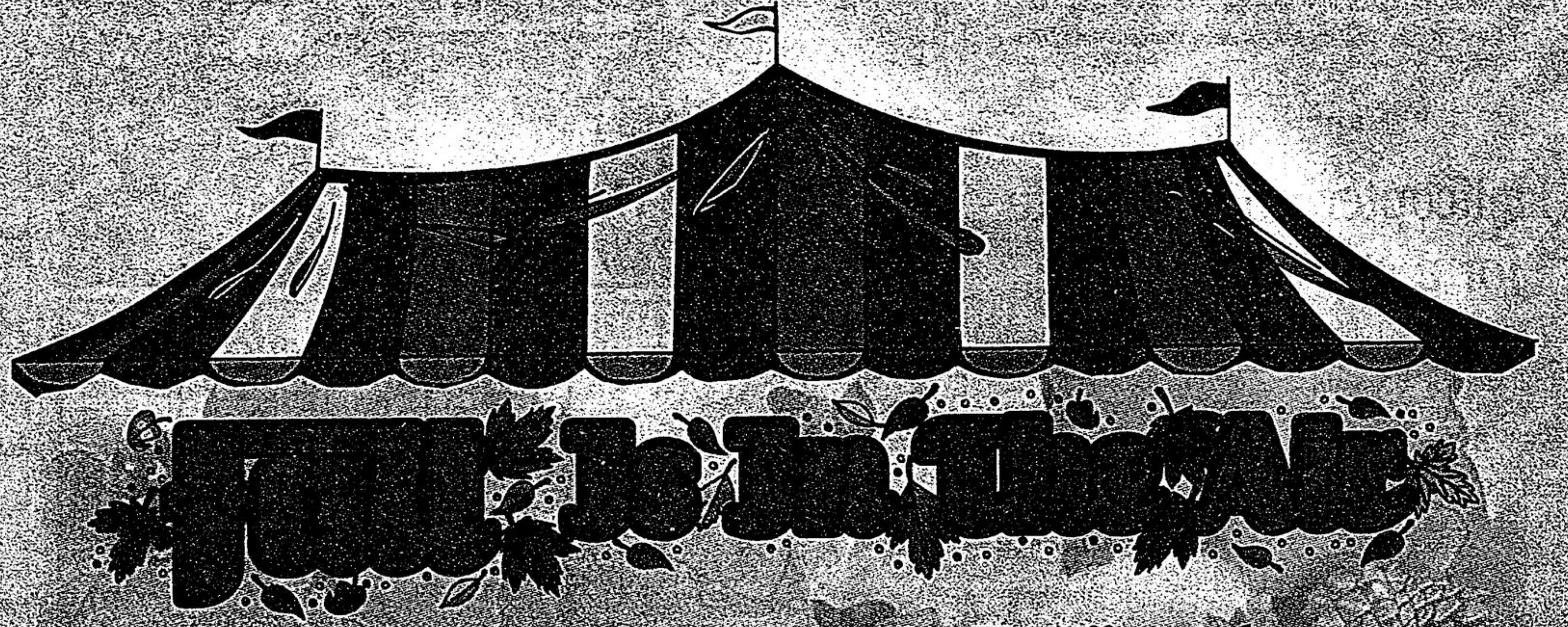
line service available to people currently on four-party service. The single-line service allows access to 911, Internet service providers, fax machines and modems.

Almost 45,000 customers in Ontario and Quebec still have four-party line service.

The changes, approved by the Canadian Radio-television and

Telecommunications Commission, will also leave 99 per cent of Bell's customers with toll-free access to at least one Internet service provider by the end of the year.

THE ARTHRITIS SOCIETY
Richmond Hill
508-5177
Richmond Hill
508-5177

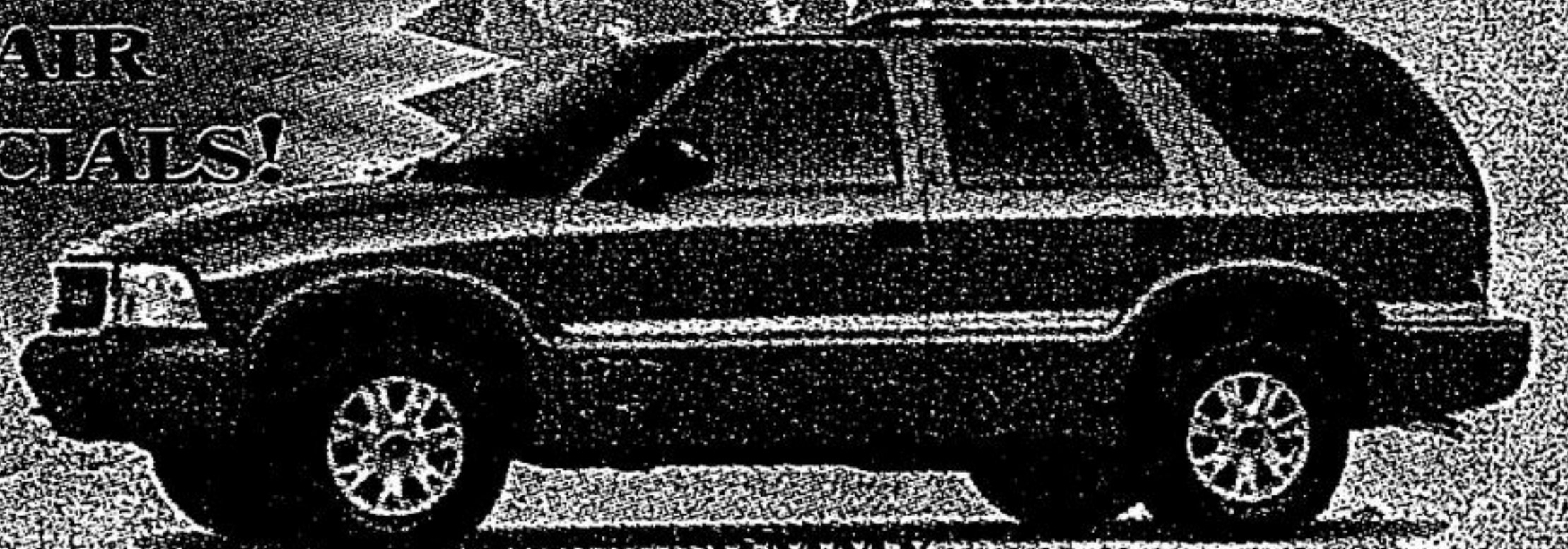


Join us "Under the Big Top" at the Markham Fair for great savings on Chev • Olds • Pontiac • Buick • Chrysler • Jeep

Ask about our
FAIR
SPECIALS!



CHEVY TRACKER



JIMMY



SILVERADO



GRAND PRIX



GRAND CHEROKEE LIMITED



DODGE RAM

unionville
MOTORS
PONTIAC-BUICK-GMC
4630 Hwy. #7 Unionville
(at Kennedy Rd.)
(905) 477-1666

LONGMAN'S
MARKHAM DODGE CHRYSLER JEEP
5426 Hwy. #7 East
(Between McCowan & Markham Rd.)
905-471-1500

NORTH POINTE
Chevrolet Pontiac Oldsmobile
The Little Dealership with a Big Heart
5336 Highway 7 (Just East of McCowan)
294-1440 Toll Free: 1-800-892-2209
www.northpointechevolds.com