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Tatone leaves Stouffville hydro

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

The man credited with saving the Whitchurch-Stouffville Hydro Electric Commission thousands of dollars and giving local customers \$100 rebates has been dismissed.

On Tuesday, commission chairperson Charles Jackson announced that the services of utility manager Nick Tatone will no longer be required.

"The one-year fixed-term general management service contract with Nick Tatone will not be renewed beyond its current expiration of Dec. 31, 1999," Jackson stated.

However, Tatone left his job on Tuesday, immediately after he was told his contract was not being renewed.

Tatone was instrumental in reducing retail distribution costs to Stouffville ratepayers, stressed Jackson.

"He also played a key role in the formation of the Upper Canada Energy Alliance and the subsequent negotiation of a bulk purchase agreement with Ontario Hydro which resulted in additional cost savings to Stouffville ratepayers. It is the

commissions view that Mr. Tatone has completed his mandate in a thoroughly professional and exemplary fashion."

Tatone put together a business plan which meant six jobs were eliminated, while most of the work was contracted out. In its first year, the commission saved more than \$400,000.

"Nick saved us big money," said local Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

If the lights go out or if someone has a problem with their bill, it will be business as usual at the commission office, Emmerson said.

Within the next few months, the commission will undergo a change to its governance and management structure as legislated by the provincial government's recently passed Bill 55.

The plan is to eventually eliminate the Whitchurch-Stouffville Hydro Electric Commission, said Commissioner and Ward 3 Councillor Peter Dobrich. In its place, a board of directors will be established. The new board, to be appointed by town council, will decide if a manager will be needed.

Markham ready for Y2K

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

The Town of Markham is almost there — latest figures show 93.7 per cent of its municipal systems are ready for whatever may come Jan. 1, 2000.

And staff say that percentage will improve to the target 99 per cent before the year's end; the remaining 1 per cent will not require compliance until well into the new year.

It's been expensive and time-consuming, but Information Technology Services director John Hodgson said he's confident the town is prepared for anything the dreaded Y2K bug cares to dish out. "Everything is on-line. Residents can be reassured the town has everything buttoned down."

That includes the replacement of the Markham Fire Department's dispatch system, one of the biggest hurdles, Hodgson said.

"There was an upgrade to the GEAC system, we replaced the old with the new and had a highly successful implementation."

Department brass had hoped the replacement may not be necessary — but a planned centralized dispatch to serve all of York Region could not be up and running in time for Jan. 1.

Other system snags included those in building permit applications and tracking systems, taxation and human resources programs, most of which have been tested and corrected.

Contingency plans in all departments are ready as well, just in case. "In the event there's a failure we were not able to identify in advance, we have plans in place to cover it off," Hodgson said. "For example, if it's a streetlight out, we would install temporary stop signs to make a four-way stop."

Hodgson pointed out Sept. 9 came and went with absolutely no problems — one of the dates experts worried would prompt similar breakdowns as Y2K, being the ninth day of the ninth month in 1999. "We are more confident about Y2K than Sept. 9," he said.

As well, New Year's Eve is a Friday, with business as usual not beginning until the following Tuesday. "If there are challenges, crews can be pulled in very quickly," Hodgson said.

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