

Community grants may open can of worms

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Five years after scrapping regional grants to community groups, some councillors want to start doling dollars out to clubs promoting tourism.

But other politicians warn the region will be opening a can of worms.

The region's economic development committee agreed to give the Resurgence Theatre Company a one-time \$5,000 arts grant to assist the group in its production of York Shakespeare Festival 2000.

The company is one of Canada's newest professional non-profit theatre companies.

Last year, the company launched the first annual Shakespeare festival in York with a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Newmarket's Fairy Lake.

More than 1,500 people attended the play over two weeks last August.

But despite the group's success, the committee's recommendation to approve the grant met with resistance from politicians at Thursday's council meeting.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson pointed out the company is

still boasting a \$22,400 surplus from last year.

The group received a \$50,000 grant last year from the provincial government toward its \$105,000 budget.

"I do have a concern because opening this up, if you start opening these grants up... I think we should be prepared to have these people come before us because they'll be lining up out the door looking for grants," Emmerson said.

"If we're prepared to get into the grant structure again, we better be prepared for the doors to be opened up."

Markham Councillor Frank Scarpitti, who pointed out the committee was only prepared to give the company a third of its \$15,000 grant request, argued there's a difference between community groups and those that bring dollars into the region through tourism.

He added the company is committed to giving children access to live theatre.

"To say there is a bunch of other groups out there that could potentially come before the region, I have a problem with that kind of approach."

But Emmerson suggested Scarpitti was being naive if he didn't think other groups would be lining up for grants.

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