

Region revives dormant grants for tourism

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

York Region is getting back into the community grants business, kick-starting a program similar to one councillors terminated five years ago.

The region's economic development committee drafted a new policy to award financial assistance to arts and community groups that support local tourism efforts. The grant program is to begin next year after funds are set aside in the 2001 budget.

The new policy is similar to a program council terminated in 1995 when it decided local arts and culture groups should be raising money through local municipalities, corporations and independent fundraising efforts rather than through the region. Instead, regional councillors elected to support more wide-spread programs, such as child abuse and family counselling services.

"The policy after a number of years was not to provide grants. That made life easy," pointed out Alan Wells, the region's chief administrative officer.

But with the insistence of Markham regional councillors, Ralph Aselin and Frank Scarpitti, the committee endorsed the new direction, splitting its \$10,000 budget between the Red Barn Theatre in Jackson's Point, and Newmarket's Resurgence Theatre Company in support of their summer programs.

Both decisions must still be approved by regional council this Thursday.

The summer theatre groups helped revive the grant issue after approaching the region donations during the last several months.

"We should adopt this for one year, and see how it works. Let's give some funds out, approve it and review it in a year's time," Scarpitti said. "If it is not fulfilling its intent, we can look at it another way. We have to leave the door open for groups to approach the region."



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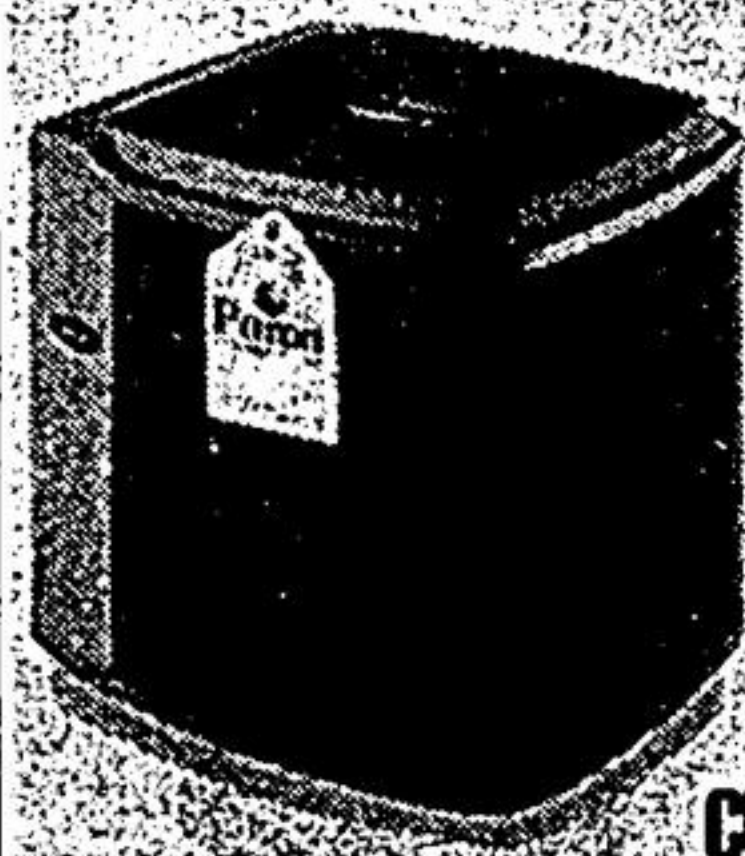
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