

WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE AMONG MUNICIPALITIES VYING FOR PROVINCIAL FUNDING TO MEET NEW WATER STANDARDS

# Building bridges to the future

BY PATRICK MANGION  
Staff Writer

A tiny bridge in a quiet area of Newmarket has been singled out as the town's top health-and-safety priority in a bid to secure infrastructure grants from the provincial government.

The Tories have made up to \$600 million in SuperBuild funding available to municipalities over the next five years, with more money on the way.

SuperBuild, an agency of the Ministry of Finance created two years ago to provide funding for the expansion and renewal of Ontario's infrastructure, requested proposals for its first initiative, OSTAR (Ontario Small Town and Rural Development Infrastructure Program), last August.

The program is for communities with a population less than 100,000, making Richmond Hill, Markham and Vaughan ineligible.

Newmarket has asked for \$200,000 from SuperBuild. Its project, estimated at a total cost of \$300,000, would replace the bridge on Timothy Street near the fairgrounds with a slightly larger structure able to accommodate two lanes of traffic along with a new sidewalk on one side.

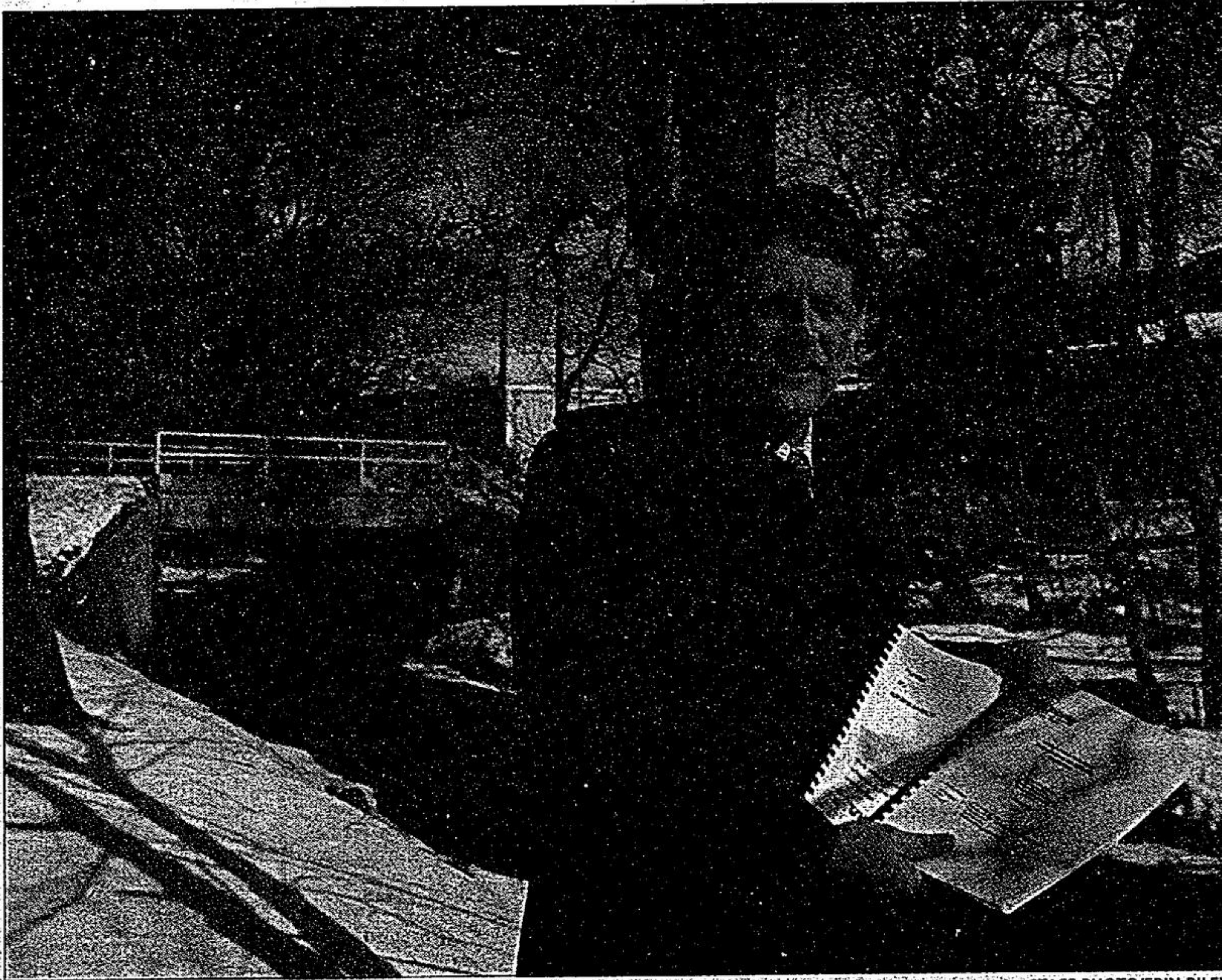
By comparison, Georgina has asked for \$27 million, half the cost of its Willow Beach water and sewer project that would service Keswick to Jackson's Point.

When asked why Newmarket didn't go after a bigger project and more funding, Bob Shelton, Newmarket's public works director, said the town wanted to be realistic in its bid.

"You can put a very large number out there and still get turned down," said Shelton. "A consultant advised us (replacing the Timothy Street bridge) would be our best chance of qualifying for funding."

Shelton said the town expects to receive funding from SuperBuild because the project is within reach. Applications for more significant sums of money are simply a reflection of the needs of other towns, he added.

The bridge on Timothy Street was identified because Newmarket does not have problems with the quality of drinking water or with water and sewer systems — two of



STAFF PHOTO/ERIN RILEY

Bob Shelton, director of public works and an engineer with the Town of Newmarket, stands in front of the Timothy Street bridge, which the town hopes to upgrade with help from a \$200,000 provincial grant under the SuperBuild fund.

the funding options available to municipalities.

It meant town officials had to look to the final option — transportation structures — for funding.

East Gwillimbury followed suit, applying for \$225,000 under the same category to repair and replace bridges and culverts around the small community.

King Township considered the contentious Big Pipe for SuperBuild funding, but eventually settled on repairing the well system in the tiny community of Ansnorveldt, which received a boil-water advisory from the region last September.

Whitchurch-Stouffville has applied for \$210,000 to improve water mains at a cost of \$310,000.

But while municipalities have filed their requests, landing grant money from the provincial government is far from a done deal.

Only projects that address the province's new drinking water protection regulations are assured funding, ministry officials said.

Projects that address health and safety will compete against hundreds of other applications from other Ontario municipalities.

*'You can put a very large number out there and still get turned down. A consultant advised us (replacing the Timothy Street bridge) would be our best chance of qualifying for funding.'*

SuperBuild president and CEO David Lindsay said he expects applications from more than 400 towns vying for a share of the infrastructure funding pie.

Each application will be judged against six criteria — such as need and cost efficiency — and will be

reviewed independently, said SuperBuild spokesperson John MacMillan, adding the SuperBuild corporation did not set a ceiling on the amount of funding for which each municipality could apply.

"(Deciding who receives funding) will be based on the merits of each business plan," explained MacMillan.

"It will be decided on how each project best meets the criteria of each round."

The size of the grant a municipality could receive is based on a cost-sharing formula.

The province will take into account the estimated cost of the project, along with a municipality's ability to contribute funding.

The SuperBuild application guidebook recommended municipalities seek private or public partners. However, officials from many of the York Region municipalities, unable to secure partnerships, said they would likely dip into capital reserves to meet any shortfalls not

covered by SuperBuild funding.

Officials from several towns in the region admitted that, without funding from SuperBuild, their infrastructure projects may be put on hold, or at least take more time.

"This (bridge replacement) project is dependent on (SuperBuild) funding," Shelton said.

Steve MacDonald, East Gwillimbury's director of corporate services, said while his town's project would take longer to complete if overlooked by SuperBuild, he doubts it would be scrapped altogether.

Shelton said Newmarket plans to ask for substantially more funding for larger infrastructure revitalization projects in future rounds of SuperBuild.

With the program still in its infancy, officials have yet to determine if there will be another round of OSTAR. Instead, municipalities are now turning their attention to SuperBuild's second initiative, sports, culture and tourism, which will likely stay within the same health-and-safety theme as OSTAR, although funding would go toward publicly owned local facilities, such as arenas and community centres.

Municipalities submitted a letter of intent in early February for the second initiative, and the application deadline is March 31.

Under the sports, culture and tourism category, every municipality in the province is eligible.

But with more applications and just \$300 million in funding, (compared to \$600 million available through OSTAR) the competition will be stiff.

The province is seeking support from the federal government for its OSTAR program.

Projects approved for funding from SuperBuild will be referred to the federal Liberal's Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program for more funding.

Over the next five years, the Ontario government is expected to spend \$10 billion through the SuperBuild program, with another \$10 billion expected to come from the private sector and partnerships.

SuperBuild replaces past infrastructure programs where all three levels of government shared funding equally.

## SKYLOFT SKI & COUNTRY CLUB

Weekdays - Open to Public with Night Skiing 9am-9pm  
Weekends - Private for Members, and their guests

Mid-Week Pass (Monday to Friday Only)

# 2 FOR 1 COUPON

Present this coupon to Skyloft Ski & Country Club prior to skiing. Must be redeemed by March 30, 2001. Weather Permitting. No Cash Equivalent. Certain Restrictions may apply.  
722 Chalk Lake Road West, P.R. #4, Uxbridge, Ontario L9P 1R4

Highest Vertical in the area with  
18 Downhill runs, and 10 km of X-Country.

See the World's first iPIX Virtual Tour with streaming ski runs!

## (905) 649-5160