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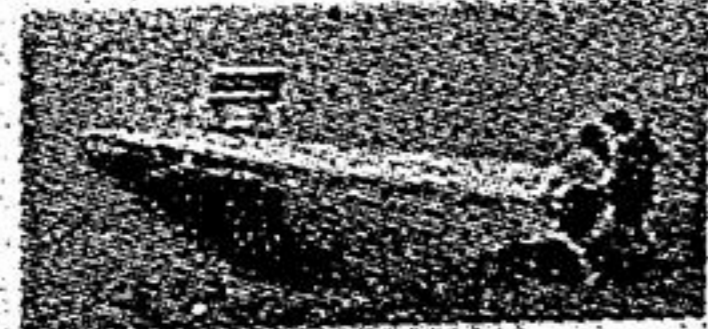
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Skateboard park a dilemma for Markham

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

A dozen teenage skateboarders crowded between the racks of shirts and caps at DBS Skate Supply in Markham this week to hear

what may happen to the town's only skateboard facility. The town no longer has the money to staff its portable skatepark, said Martha Neely, a community services department official

invited to speak at the Main Street, Markham store.

She suggested the skateboarders could help run the facility themselves, unlocking it for the afternoon, folding it back into its storage trailer and paying a \$15 seasonal membership to keep up repairs.

"We'd like it to be a club," said Neely, recreation program co-ordinator for the Markham Village Area, later adding the town would consider other ideas.

The town, which had staff supervise the temporary set of ramps at Centennial Community Centre, charged users \$2 a day last summer but lost money on the operation. It is looking for ways in which the skatepark can break even, Community Services Commissioner Alan Wolfe said Thursday.

Stouffville's skateboard park, called Over The Edge, is entering its third season of operation in Thicketwood Park near the downtown core. It's used by skateboarders from around the Greater Toronto Area. Users can buy a season pass or pay by the hour, with the proviso that all must wear safety equipment, including helmets, elbow pads and knee pads (which can be rented on-site).

Meanwhile, some teens have told the Economist & Sun/Tribune they are not sat-

isfied with the Markham park.

"It does not meet our needs because it is very small, there are not very many ramps and it is not permanent," wrote Kyle Vaudry, a 13-year-old enthusiast.

Neely, who said the town wants to have the park at the Markham Village Community Centre this year, thought Main Street business owners would be pleased to hear the temporary park will operate this summer. Skateboarders say they face anger from local merchants when they practise their sport, and note the town has heavy fines for skateboarding on the grounds of public buildings.

DBS Skate Supply has been the headquarters for a campaign to build a new and permanent skateboard park in the area. Wolfe said the proposed town budget contains money to study a permanent facility.

But Brad Hainschwang, owner of DBS and a consultant on the project, said the portable skatepark wasn't worth the cost.

But Hainschwang is encouraging customers to use the portable facility anyway, to show Markham councillors the demand for skateboarding. "It'll just help us get the concrete skatepark faster."

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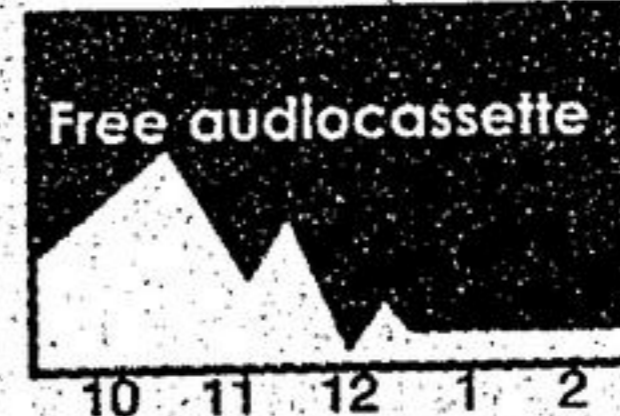
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