

Effort to protect environment earns awards for region

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

York Region's planning department has won three awards, two for planning strategies that protect the environment and another for its information dispersal initiatives.

The region has won two awards for "green" planning. The Greening

of York Region Strategy and the municipality's Greenlands Property Securement Strategy were recognized by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

The Greening of York Region aims to enhance the region's natural features and create awareness of environmental issues, while the securement strategy protects natural areas through purchases by the

municipality and incentives for private property owners.

The Environmental System Research Institute has recognized York's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) initiative with its 2001 Award of Excellence.

The region's GIS system provides in-depth information on numerous aspects of the region's geography, providing potential

developers or investors with computer-based data.

The region was recognized primarily for its YorkInfo Partnership initiative, a partnership with local municipalities, school boards, the conservation authority and other agencies.

Markham Councillor Frank Scarpitti, who chairs the planning committee, said the region is

breaking ground with its initiatives.

"We always consider ourselves to be leaders in so many of the areas of responsibility we have," he said.

Other municipalities look to York's activities "as an example of the kinds of things they should be doing in their own communities," Scarpitti said.

Firefighter aims to climb Everest in Markham

BY ASHLEY JOANNOU
Special

Before tackling the treacherous heights of Mount Everest, Glenn Edwards will take on Markham's most suitable substitute, the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Centre.

The Markham firefighter is planning to climb the equivalent height of Everest, 29,035 feet. This means he has to ascend the 10-story hotel and conference centre 257 times for a total of 43,947 stairs.

Beginning at 4 p.m. on today, he will stair-climb non-stop until

2 p.m. on Saturday. As if this was not enough of a challenge, Edwards will be wearing his full fire-fighting equipment which he says adds an extra 30 pounds.

This feat is just one of many fundraisers that he has already done or plans to do, all to raise money for the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada.

In February he cross-country skied 280 km and in August he ran 80.2 km from his home in Orangeville to his workplace in Markham.

That's not the end of it. Next on the list? Aiming to set the

world-record for stair climbing on a machine. Also planned is another possible run from home to work.

So far, \$4,000 has been raised, the goal being to raise \$88,500 — \$10 for every vertical metre of Mount Everest.

As crazy as these stunts may sound, Edwards is only using them as "training events" to eventually fulfill his life-long dream.

In May 2003 he will attempt to become the first Canadian to scale Mount Everest without supplementary oxygen.

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