

# Embassy Suites hotel now the 4-star Hilton Suites

BY JESSICA ROWLANDS  
Special

Markham's Embassy Suites Hotel has become a well-known brand since it opened in 1989. Now, owner Herman Grad wants to accomplish the same thing with a new name: the Hilton Suites.

Staff and management of Hwy. 7/Warden Avenue landmark gathered for the renaming ceremony Tuesday.

In attendance were

Markham mayor Don Cousens and Robert Dirks, the California-based senior vice president of brand management and marketing for the worldwide Hilton chain.

"This is what a first-class hotel is supposed to be," Mr. Dirks said during his speech in the hotel's lobby.

"We were going to change the name because our ranking (the Embassy Suites was considered a three-star facility) was too low," noted Mr. Grad.

"When we added the conference centre, the extra suites and the spa, we had to upgrade our name to either the Hilton or the Four Seasons."

The renaming deal was made in mid-December, explained Mr. Grad.

"We believe the change will be a marketing step forward," he said, adding the rebranding process will cost Hilton and the 500-room hotel about \$1 million in marketing and advertising.

Despite this, Mr. Grad said the change will increase business.

Ashok Baghel, the hotel's general manager, agreed, noting, "Hilton is known world wide and it has a stronger reservation system."

As part of the renaming ceremony, the hotel became the first Canadian Hilton to make a donation in the chain's Random Acts of Service program.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Folding sheets on Tuesday at the Hilton Suites Toronto/Markham Conference Centre & Spa are charities from York Region represented by (clockwise from left): Louise Moody, Maryanne Proulx, Brenda Houston, Franca Damiani Carella, Daniele Zanotti, Nora Thomson, Monica Auerbach, Robin Hannah, Marg Campbell, Alexandra Dean and Penny Kroll. The Hilton Suites donated more than 1,000 pounds of linens and toiletries to the charities.

Mr. Grad and company gave 1,000 pounds of linens

and toiletries to ten charities in York Region.

Mr. Grad hopes the donation will spur on other businesses in the Markham area.

"There are people in the community that are needy," he said.

"It just felt like it was the right thing to do."

Mr. Grad bought the Embassy/Hilton Suites land in 1987. Less than two years later the hotel opened.

Since then it's doubled in size — to more than a 600,000 square feet — and employees, currently numbering about 400.

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