

Province gives \$15 million to protect moraine

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Also on Friday, at a conservation area just east of Vaughan, Ontario Premier Ernie Eves released details on the newly-formed Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, part of its plan to protect the landform and the groundwater it holds.

The province will contribute \$15 million to the foundation, which will acquire land on the moraine, promote good stewardship by landowners, conduct research and help to complete and maintain a moraine trail system.

Mr. Collette's decision to retain full ownership of the federal green space came after more than a year of consultation with various agencies and groups. The minister maintained "there was neither support for one particular proponent — nor was there a proponent volunteering — to take on the tasks associated with protecting these lands as green space."

Two groups — the locally-based Green Door Alliance and Evergreen Common Grounds of Toronto — had both proposed to sell some of the land with legal easements attached to pre-

vent development. However, both organizations said they were pleased with Friday's result, which includes continued input into the park from an appointed stewardship committee.

Mr. Collette also moved to reassure farmers and other tenants on the land after a Durham Regional councillor, Rick Johnson, told the minister of rumours "running rampant through the community that there could be leases terminated."

"No one should feel threatened in any way," said Mr. Collette.

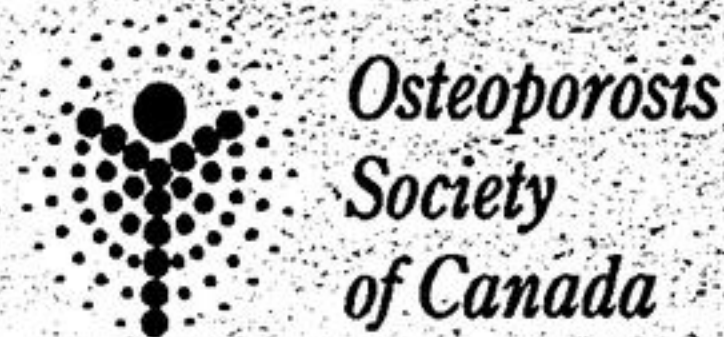
"We're not in the business of kicking anybody out of here who's living here."

Markham farmer Jay Reesor, who represented other "Rouge corridor" farmers in consultations, said he doesn't think tenants should be worried.

The announcement brought joy to politicians from Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville and to local Liberal MPs, such as Bryan Wilfert of Oak Ridges, who played a part in the consultations.

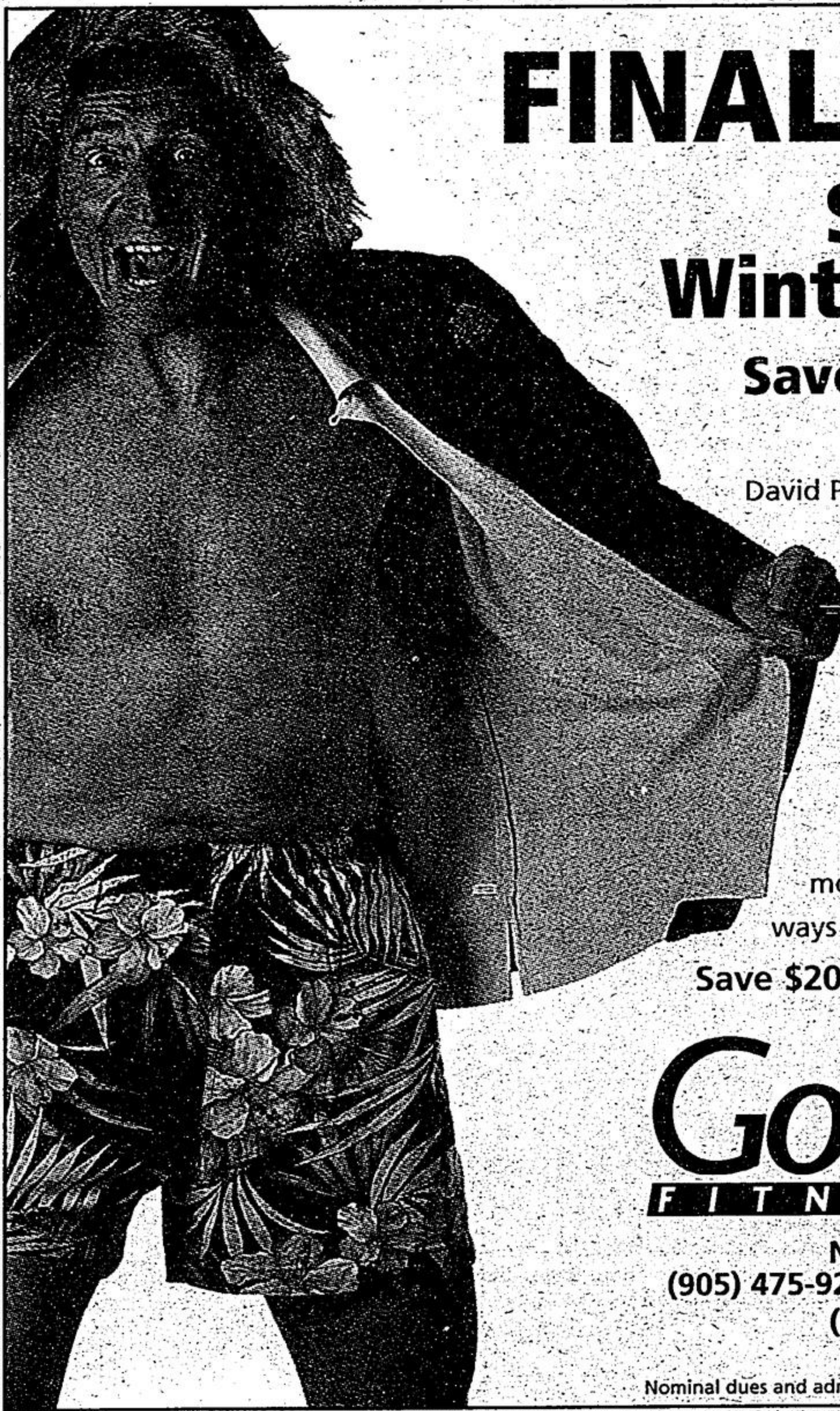
"Someday we'll say this is the start of a national park in the east end of Markham," Markham Councillor Jack Heath predicted.

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