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Towns wait for money from province

From page 1.

have just started to address the problem and they're finding they have no money to pay for it.

"Maybe they're waiting for a new deal from the provincial and federal governments or they're selling their hydros."

As well as providing for existing infrastructure, Mr. Elliott said the town must also start saving now for the maintenance of each new facility it builds.

"If we're looking at a new arena, that will cost us an extra \$90,000 a year, which must be set aside. So when the roof goes, we've got the money ready for it," he said.

Mr. Elliott said a contribution from the \$141 million sale of Richmond Hill Hydro is only a partial solution. The town must find a long-term answer.

Aurora has just started to address the problem and intends to spread the cost over the next three years, according to finance director Allan Evelyn.

"It's a challenge," he said. "Currently, there is no provision for any kind of depreciation or contribution to the rehabilitation or replacement of those assets. And it will certainly be a component in this next budget cycle to begin to address those challenges."

Though he didn't have an exact figure, he said the cost of setting up a reserve repair fund will be high.

"It will be significant and I suspect council will want options on phasing this type of a program in, because to address this in one year is not fiscally responsible, or even a likely option."

Mr. Evelyn said it was unlikely higher levels of government would fund repairs to existing infrastructure.

Joel Lustig, manager of financial planning in Markham, said the town spends more money every year on infrastructure and has increased significantly the amount of tax revenue applied to maintenance and supply programs.

Every year, the town applies the first 25 per cent of all assessment revenue it collects from new residential, commercial and industrial properties to those programs. In 2002, \$12.5 million in taxes was put toward capital programs, an extra \$500,000 over the year before.

*"It's not a crisis,
but it is a concern."*

"So, realizing there is an aging infrastructure, we realize more funding needs to be applied to it," he said.

For the most part, he said the town will deal with repairs on a one-by-one basis. Over the last two years, the town has been putting a lot of money into its road replacement fund, he said. About 10 kilometres of roads are added to the town every year.

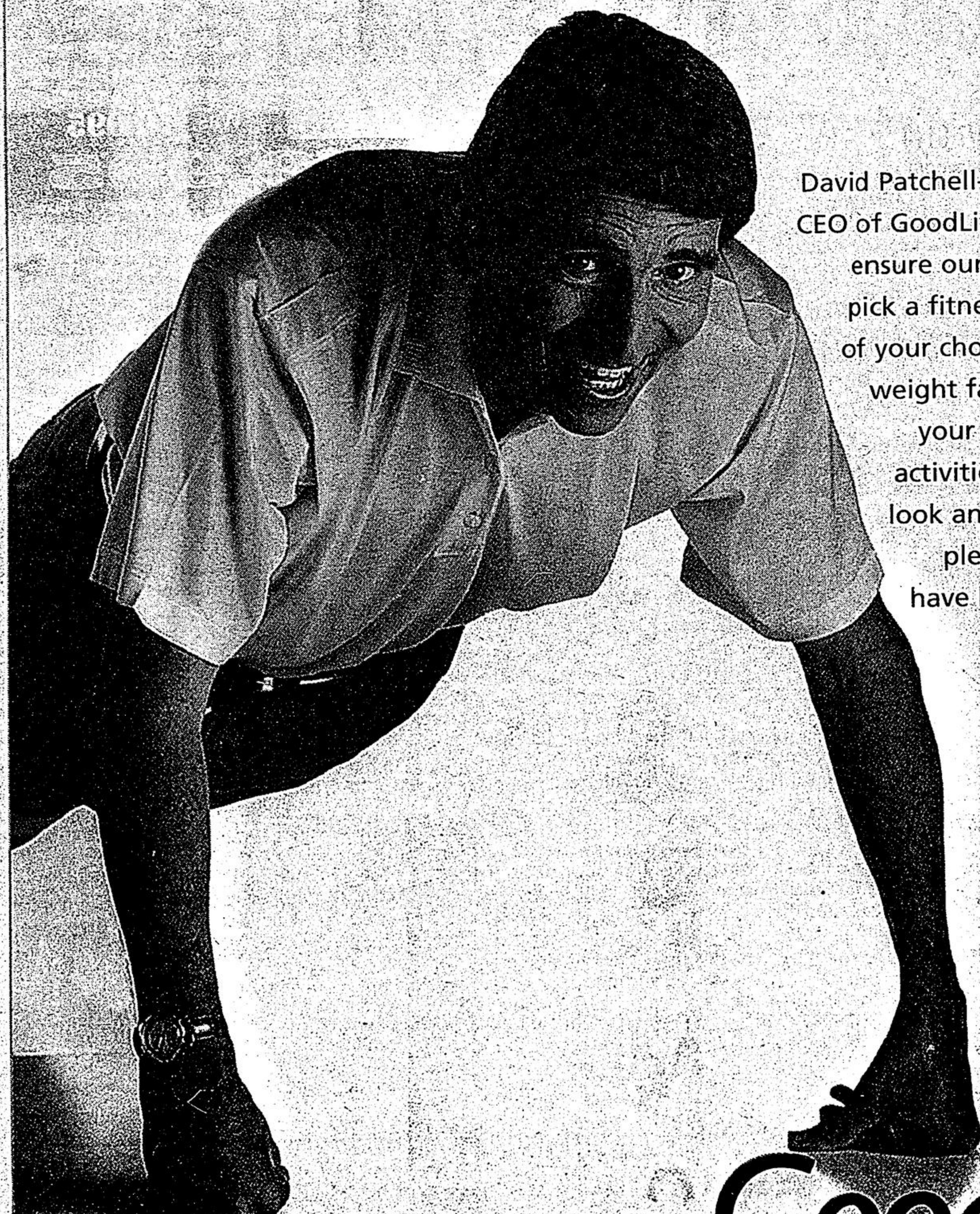
"We realized the amount of money we had in previous years for asphalt resurfacing program wasn't sufficient to deal with the growth in the municipality and we put more money into it," he said.

"It's one of those challenges most municipalities face and we address them the best we can."

Georgina CAO Stan Armstrong said aging infrastructure was not a major problem facing the town.

"It's not a crisis, but it is a concern. The one advantage is we're not faced with replacing all our infrastructure at the same time," he said, adding the town plans to accrue funds over time to make repairs as they're needed.

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