

United Way campaign close to goal

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

York Region's United Way campaign is down to the very short strokes and organizers say it looks like they are going to meet their 2003 target of \$6.2 million.

"You could say we're cautiously optimistic we're going to make it," said David Spedding, director of development for United Way of York Region, Tuesday. "With only a week left in the campaign, we've hit \$5.1 million, but we still have to collect envelopes from some employers. I think we're going to make it."

EMPLOYEE CAMPAIGNS BIG

About 55 per cent of the fundraising comes from employee campaigns in York Region workplaces.

With the campaign wrapping up, Mr. Spedding urged people not to wait too long before making their contributions, especially if they hope to get a tax receipt. Under federal legislation, receipts for

this taxation year are issued for donations received prior to Dec. 31.

"It takes a certain amount of time to process all donations, so we encourage people not to wait until the last minute to submit their gifts."

He said United Way volunteers have seen strong growth in many employee campaigns throughout the region, citing Solectron Global Services in Newmarket, which donated more than \$60,000 this year, a 101-per-cent increase over 2002.

STEELCASE BIG CONTRIBUTOR

In the long-range category, he cited Steelcase Canada in Markham, which has been contributing since the region's United Way campaign began 27 years ago and has donated more than \$2 million.

United Way of York Region provides funding to 40 social service agencies.

Donors can link to the campaign through the website at www.uwyr.on.ca or call 905-474-9974.

Marijuana illegal, again: courts

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"It's difficult enough for parents to raise their children. We don't need mixed signals from the government," he said.

The Liberal government's proposal called for fines, rather than criminal penalties, such as jail time and a criminal record, for anyone caught with a small amount of marijuana.

Politicians are unnecessarily undoing the work of police and community leaders to curb drug use, Chief La Barge said.

"As a tax-paying citizen, I

thought the government would have more pressing issues. The government seems intent on rushing when there doesn't seem to be a clamour for (decriminalization)," he said.

"I don't hear from parents, Chief. I disagree with you on this," Chief La Barge added.

But if plans for decriminalization go forward in the future, Chief La Barge said politicians must also consider several ramifications, such as police forces ill-equipped to detect drivers impaired by drug use and an increase in demand fed by illegal

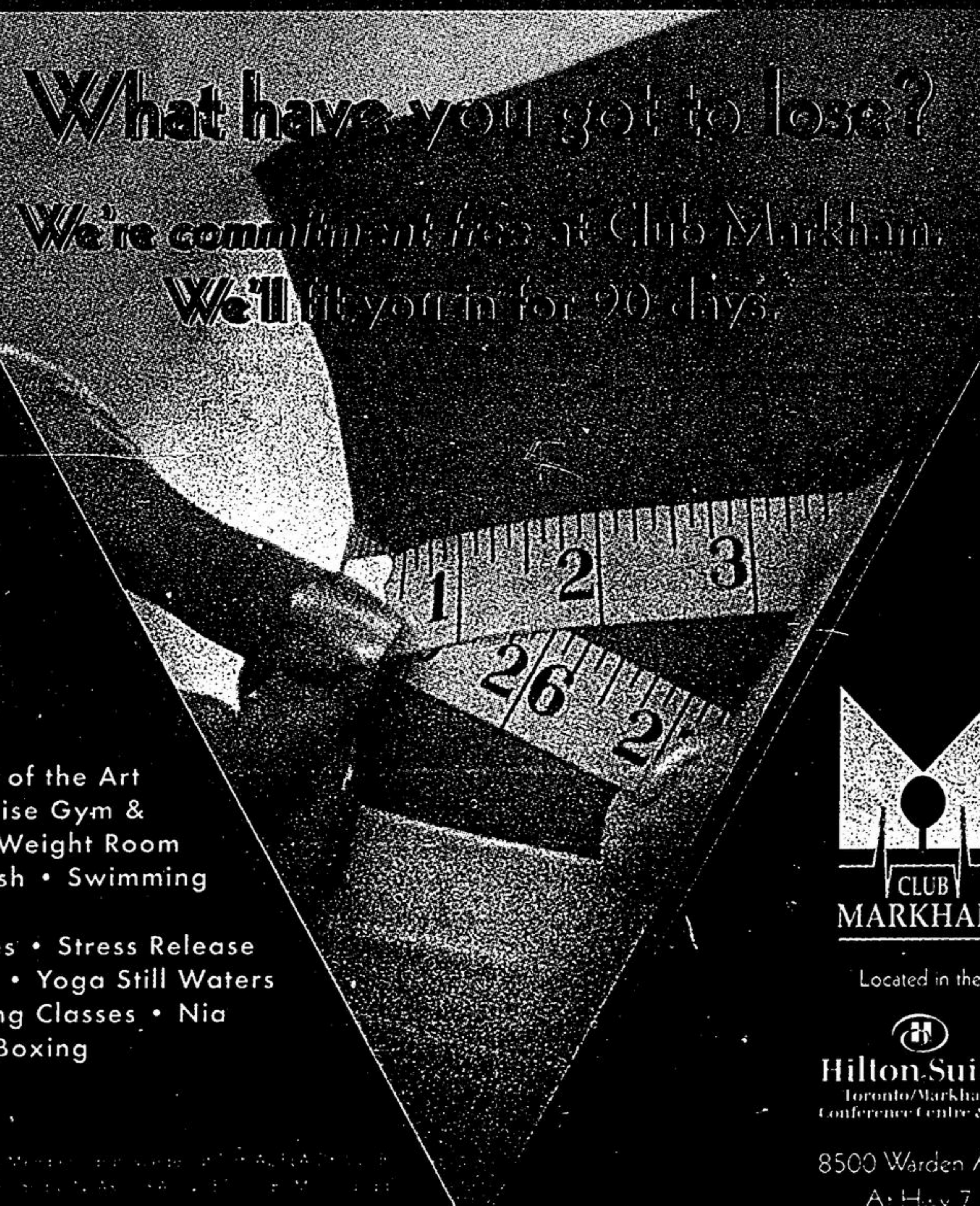
grow house operations.

"Whether you say (marijuana) use is OK or not, that's the message getting out," Chief La Barge said.

Since last summer, possession of small amounts of marijuana had been considered legal after an Ontario judge ruled that possessing less than 30 grams of pot was no longer against the law.


An Appeal Court ruling made possession illegal for recreational users, but ensured a stable source of government-approved pot for those prescribed it for medicinal purposes.

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