

United Way tops \$6M mark

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

For the first time in its history, York Region's United Way has raised more than \$6 million for the 40 social service agencies it supports.

In fact, at an appreciation dinner Thursday night, campaign chairperson Garth Issett announced generous residents and businesses contributed \$71,000 more than the \$6.2-million goal set last September.

"We're really pleased," he said, adding donations continue to trickle in.

After several years of being close, we have passed the \$6-million mark."

But along with the good news came a sobering message.

Mr. Issett warned the United Way is

actually further behind financially than it was before it kicked off the drive, even though this year's goal was a 5-per-cent increase over last year.

"Even with the goal we set, it was a 5-per-cent increase year over year, that just keeps up with the population growth," said Mr. Issett, the vice-president of the financial services sector with IBM Global Services Canada.

"You haven't even covered inflation. So even with the 5 per cent, you're already 3 per cent behind."

At the same time, Mr. Issett suggested York's growth and changing demographics are placing an even greater strain on social agencies than in the past.

"We clearly see the increasing

demand in the community because of the growth and government funding not keeping up with that population growth."

The goal for next year's campaign won't be set until the summer, but Mr. Issett hinted the United Way will be looking for a significant increase.

He pointed out the organization managed to exceed this year's goal despite a sluggish economy, SARS and the power outage.

"If you expect people will be as equally generous and we will have a better economic outlook, we should come up with at least as much (as 5 per cent more)," he said. "We're going to build a strategy to try to make a bigger impact in the community next year."



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