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CAMP REGISTRATION

16 more cars on patrol in budget

From page 1.

machete attack — from this newspaper and others.

After an hour's discussion, the region's finance committee gave its approval to a \$137.3-million budget, which must still pass public scrutiny and a vote at York Region council.

The only dissenting vote at Thursday's meeting came from finance chairperson Don Cousens, who had called for cutbacks, particularly a request for 110 new officers this year, in two earlier budget sessions.

Mr. Cousens, the mayor of Markham, said he preferred an option calling for 63 new officers in 2004, which would save \$5 million. But when the budget was given committee approval, he said, "It's one vote I don't mind losing."

CHANGE IN CALCULATION

Although the budget passed without cuts, the final figure is \$2.7 million less than the \$140-million first draft, largely because of a change in the method of calculating the cost of hiring 110 new cops.

In the first draft, salaries and benefits over a whole year were included, even though the first 60 won't be on the pay-

roll until August and the rest in December. "By changing the policy, we reduce the figure for this year by at least \$2.2 million," said regional chairperson Bill Fisch.

The committee also agreed to apply \$500,000 of the \$10 million the region will receive from the federal government's GST rebate to the police budget.

Vaughan Mayor Michael Di Biase referred to the crime statistics and a recent upsurge in violence in Toronto in support of the budget.

Hiring 110 cops this year will mean an additional 16 patrol vehicles in peak periods in the region, four each in Vaughan and Markham, three each in Richmond Hill and Aurora-Newmarket and two in the northern part of the region.

"We will no longer be moving cars out of East Gwillimbury, Georgina and King when we get priority one calls in Newmarket," Chief La Barge told the committee.

The hirings are part of an ambitious five-year plan that will increase the current complement of 985 sworn officers to 1,363 by 2008, bringing the police-to-population ratio to one to 743 in York Region. The current rate of one cop to 870 residents is the worst in the GTA.

MARCH BREAK REGISTRATION

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