

Hospital switches to automated parking system

Live parking lot attendants faced traffic backups

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Markham Stouffville Hospital says it's trying to improve traffic around its parking lot, not gouge people who park.

The hospital switched its parking strategy this week from one with gates and human attendants to one where visitors buy tickets from

machines.

Even with two lanes in and attendants working the same number of kiosks during the morning or noontime rush, people had called the Markham Stouffville administration on cell phones, complaining they were stuck in line, hospital facilities director John Haley said.

"We routinely had 15 or 20 cars deep trying to get into the parking lot and the same trying to get out."

When visitors arrived Monday, the gates had vanished and there were 10 ticket-dispensing machines in the 400-space lot, plus new entrances and exits.

'If you don't have enforcement, you have abuse.'

John Haley
Markham Stouffville Hospital

"And this has helped, for sure," Mr. Haley said.

The new system, however, left some people angry or anxious. They said it was difficult to pay in advance for a ticket specifying how long they would be at the hospital or the adjacent medical office building.

People who stay longer than the time on the ticket can be given a \$30 fine.

The hospital has not issued any fines yet, but it has been putting warning tags on cars, said Mr. Haley, who said such fines must eventually be issued.

"If you don't have enforcement, you have abuse."

The system is the same at York Region's other hospitals and the rates — \$2 a half-hour up to the \$8 daily maximum — have not changed.

Seniors have complained, however, about the end of their long-

standing 50-per-cent parking discount at Markham Stouffville.

The ticket machines cannot recognize seniors, Mr. Haley said, but they can still receive 30-per-cent discounts on seven-day passes or on 30-day passes if they buy them from a hospital cashier or come in and ask for a rebate.

On Friday, the hospital said it would also offer discounts on one-day passes for seniors and promised to announce details soon.

The hospital is sympathetic to people's confusion and security staff have been trying to assist them in the lot, Mr. Haley said.

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