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PROVINCE WANTS YOU OUT OF YOUR CAR

More money for Viva, new 404 HOV lanes

BY CAROLINE GRECH
Staff Writer

If you think you can get away from attempts by the region and province to get you out of your car and onto public transportation, think again.

The province is injecting more money into initiatives designed to eliminate single-passenger vehicles from highways.

"Viva, to me, has been a real success story," Ontario Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar said at the Smart-Commute 404-7 transportation luncheon in Markham.

Hosted by the Markham Board of Trade and the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce, many of York Region's MPs and local officials were on hand.

Mr. Takhar confirmed he has committed the \$7.3 million needed to start Phase 2 of Viva.

The money will cover the costs for preliminary design and engineering work, including designated bus lanes.

Mr. Takhar also applauded high-occupancy vehicle lanes that opened in December.

"The HOV lanes are exceeding our expectations. When we first started this, we thought we would have 1,150 cars riding in them after one year," Mr. Takhar

See HOV, page 12.

Long arms of the law



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

OPP officer Ron Rahim lifts Glad Park Public School student Ryan Brown during basketball game at the school yesterday. Five OPP Aurora detachment officers support a group of Grade 8 boys who give up their time to read to other students and promote literacy. Mr. Rahim's daughter, Jordan, attends the school. The students won in overtime, 26-24.

York vote mirrors Canada

Region will play vital role in election outcome: professor

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

It isn't exactly "as goes York Region, so goes the country," but it's the next best thing, a University of Toronto political science professor said.

Going into Monday's federal election, York voters will play a vital role in determining the outcome, said Nelson Wiseman, who called the region a bellwether community.

"York Region is a barometer. York Region itself won't decide that (outcome), but the results there are a measure of change," Mr. Wiseman, a specialist in Canadian politics, said.

"If you had blinders on election night and all you were told were the results in York Region, from that, you can extrapolate for the rest of the country."

York's demographics, featuring many affluent, upwardly mobile, politically astute with middle to right-of-middle leanings, highly educated, home-owning families, show why NDP leaders give the region wide berth during political campaigns while Liberal and Conservative leaders have York in their crosshairs.

"York Region is a dynamic region. It's one of the fastest-growing regions in the country, as we know, not only in terms of numbers, but in terms of diversity. It has potential volatility," Mr. Wiseman said.

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