

ENVIRONMENT: \$350,000 advertising campaign on tap

Shopping bags banned from green bins May 1

BY CHRIS TRABER
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Beginning May 1, only certified compostable bags in your green bin will be acceptable.

The approved plan to do away with plastic bags has been slowly phased in since 2009 and a \$357,000 advertising and awareness campaign was launched this month to remind you.

York Region collects more green bin material per household than any other municipality in the Greater Toronto Area, making it one of the most successful organic diversion programs in Ontario, regional

ON THE WEB

► For more information, including local retailers that carry approved bags, go to york.ca/waste

chairperson Bill Fisch has said.

Plastic accounts for 6 per cent of what the region collects through its organic waste program, environmental services commissioner Erin Mahoney said. The new bylaw is good, green news, she added.

The new bags are made of paper

or plant-based materials and, while more expensive than plastic shopping bags, are readily available.

The acceptable bags, recognized by a certified compostable logo, will break down completely into compost, the region said.

But you should be aware of a number of brands marketing bags for use with green bin waste that are not certified compostable, she said.

Some brands are biodegradable rather than compostable. Biodegradable bags break down into smaller pieces of plastic. These smaller pieces will not

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decompose and will become a contaminant in the final composted product.

The region will not be selling the

approved bags.

But the grace period will end May 1, Ms Mahoney said.

Each municipality is responsible for waste collection and re-enforcement of the bylaw.

If you continue to use plastic shopping bags in your green bin, expect to find your organic waste left at the curb, notification or other penalties, including fines.

The program will be monitored and audits will be conducted over the next six months to determine the plan's effectiveness and if enforcement needs to be increased, the region said.

Downtown Stouffville

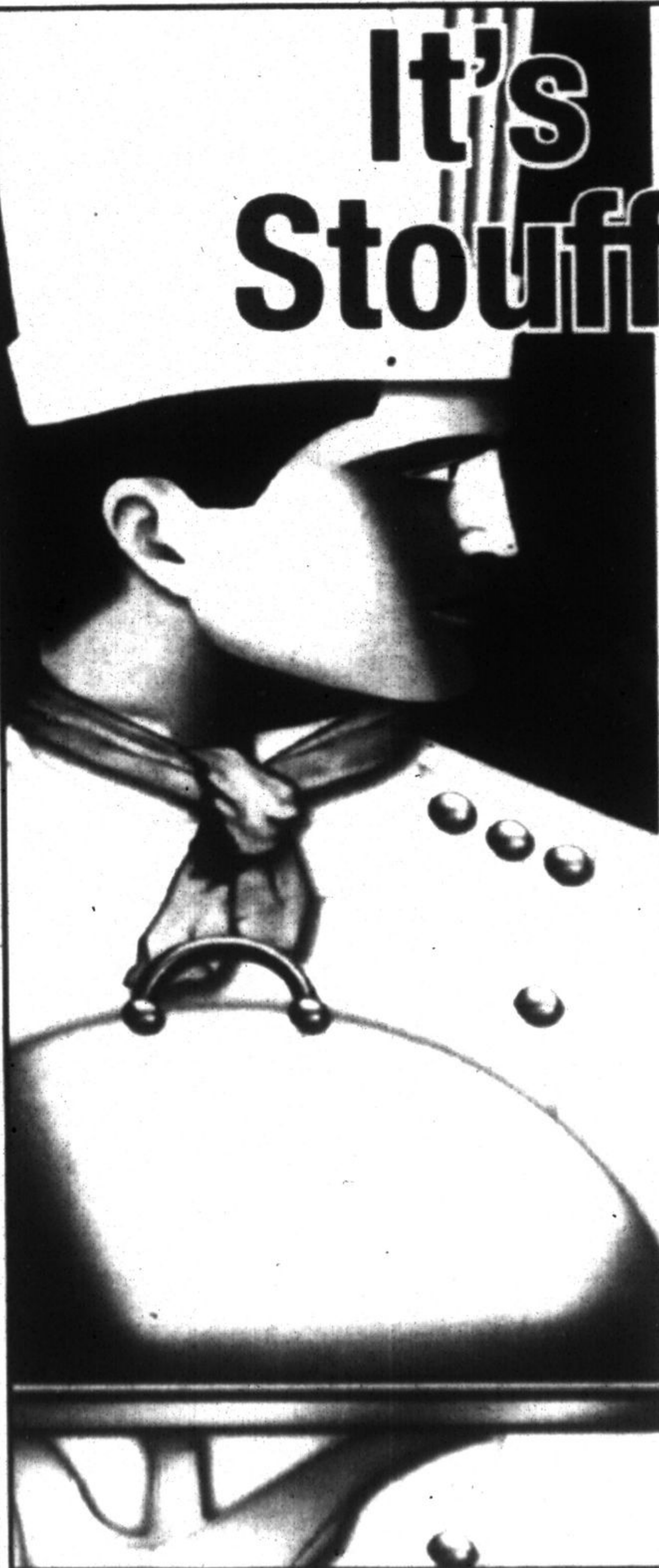
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