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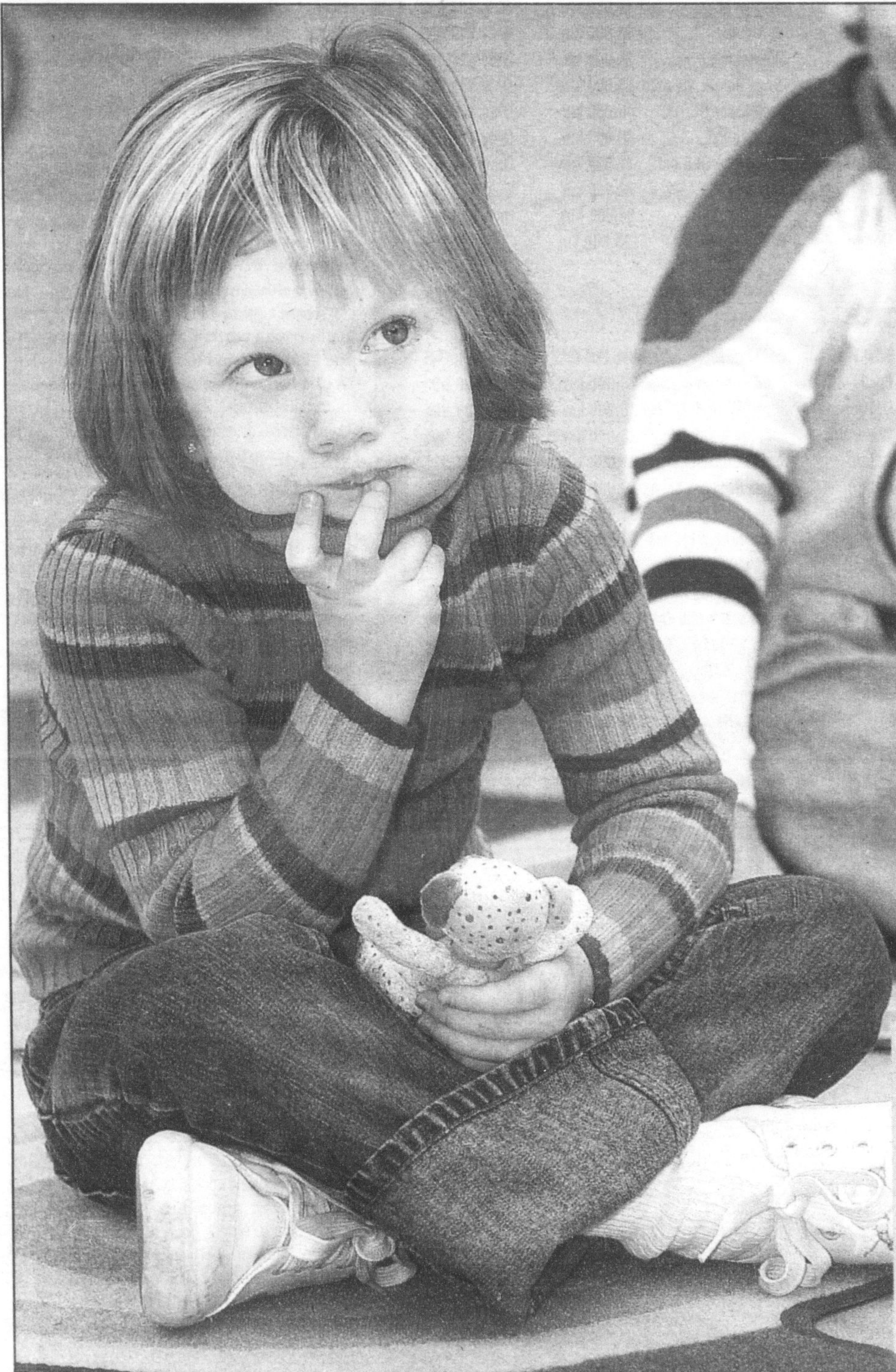


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Workers grieving mandatory flu shots ordered by Region

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

The union representing Allendale employees is filing a grievance against the Region after learning staff have been ordered to get the flu shot or stay home from work during the upcoming flu season.

Terry Moore, staff representative with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), said the mandatory immunization at the long-term care facility operated by the Region is "too broad and too heavy-handed."

"The Region has substantially upped the ante. We see this as being an unreasonable work rule," he said. "The proper way to address it is not to put people in the position of getting the vaccine or not working at all."

Mr. Moore, who's appeared before regional council in the past on behalf of the 300-plus Local 261 members employed at Allendale, was quick to point out OPSEU isn't trying to downplay the importance of infection control, but balance employees' interests with it.

What the union would like to see, he

said, is a continuation of the previous system — with employees being encouraged to get the flu shot voluntarily, then those who opt not to be immunized be sent home during an outbreak.

"We're trying to find a middle ground here," he said.

Mr. Moore explained there's a variety of reasons certain employees choose not to get the vaccine, such as some have had a bad reaction to it in the past, or others believe it's just not in their best interest.

"Some people just simply don't want to have a vaccination for something that may or may not happen," he said. "They see it as an invasion of their medical privacy."

The grievance will be filed with Allendale's administrator and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the matter. Mr. Moore said if it's not settled after that meeting, then it will go to arbitration.

The flu shot order affects about 350 staff,
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All ears

Melanie Marlow listens intently during family storytime Saturday morning at Milton Mall. About a dozen youngsters and their caregivers took in the event, which was presented by the Milton Public Library.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

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