

Weekender

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Stouffville B.I.A. rapped by Council

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

Stouffville's Business Improvement Area lacks focus and takes on too many projects, Town Council charged Tuesday.

The downtown merchants' group was slammed by local politicians and town staff in a number of different areas during debate over an annual grant for the group.

But BIA spokesmen, after hearing the comments, said its priorities are right on target and the group is doing the best it can with what it has. BIA Chairman Sandra Stronach approached Council for a \$7,000 Main Street flower grant in January.

It was then decided the group's budget should be submitted in February to Town Director of Finance Ed Blackburn who would recommend the amount the BIA would be allotted for the flowers.

"This never happened. I only received the (BIA budget) yesterday," Mr. Blackburn said. But Paul Roney, a BIA director, and Mrs. Stronach said information was sent to the Town last month. Both parties must have understood what was needed, she said.

The BIA originally requested the \$7,000 for the annual "Beautify Main Street" flower project.

But Mr. Blackburn said he doesn't believe they need the whole \$7,000. And Mayor Fran Sainsbury said the merchants' group "doesn't have its priorities straight" and added they are taking on too many projects at once.

However, Mrs. Stronach said the BIA "has stretched its budget to the limit. We don't spend our money unnecessarily." The mayor told Council the group "took on" the PRIDE grant and are now doing the Harvest show, the Strawberry Festival, the Festival of Bells and the flower project.

"I might as well be honest. They should get their act in gear, trim their budget and get their priorities straight," Mayor Sainsbury maintained.

"Now they're doing A,B,C and

D and want the taxpayers to help cover too many costs," the mayor added.

"I agree we have to have a better focus to get the whole BIA group interested but we're doing the best we can," Mrs. Stronach countered in a subsequent interview. "We don't get extra money from anyone. We get no extra money from the Town except for the flowers," Mrs. Stronach insisted.

But "it's the (BIA's) own fault," said Ward 3 Councillor Nick Tatone, council representative on the BIA.

"They need to do some (budget) stretching and some vital thinking," he added. But Mr. Roney said "(the BIA) has already stretched its (\$43,000) budget to the limit: to the benefit of the Town and the enjoyment of the people."

Council, sitting in committee, voted to allot the group \$5,300 (last year's allotment plus six per cent) and will approve the amount at an upcoming Council meeting. "I'm pleased with the money we are getting but I am displeased with (the Town's) comments," she said.

Separate board prepares for cuts

JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

Separate school trustees are reluctantly sharpening their scissors in preparation to cut staff and programs during this year's budget process.

York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board supporters face a 36 per cent tax increase if the board is to break even without slicing programs, trustees were told at a presentation of the second draft of the budget.

Unwilling to force such a tax hike on ratepayers, trustees looked at 10 possible areas of cutbacks at Wednesday's special budget meeting.

the French immersion and industrial arts/family studies programs.

French immersion, with an enrolment of 746, costs the board \$757,212 and IA/FS costs \$1.1 million and serves 5,000 students.

Director of Education Frank Bobesich reviewed services that could be axed, including adult and continuing education, late-run buses for high schools and educational assistants.

Markham Trustee Terry Ryan opposed cuts to late-run transportation, sliced to three nights from four this year already.

"Pass the pain around first," he said.

Mr. Bobesich also recommended reducing the number of discretionary supply days (days teachers are away from class on board-initiated seminars) by 25 per cent.

He also suggested putting a hold on general school budgets by foregoing the expected five per cent increase and cutting \$1 million from the

\$3-million computer budget.

"Wherever we can squeeze we're squeezing," Mr. Bobesich said.

"We're not going to come out of this process without hurting."

The board is in the dark about general legislative grants, expected to be released by the end of the month.

Water supply 'safe'

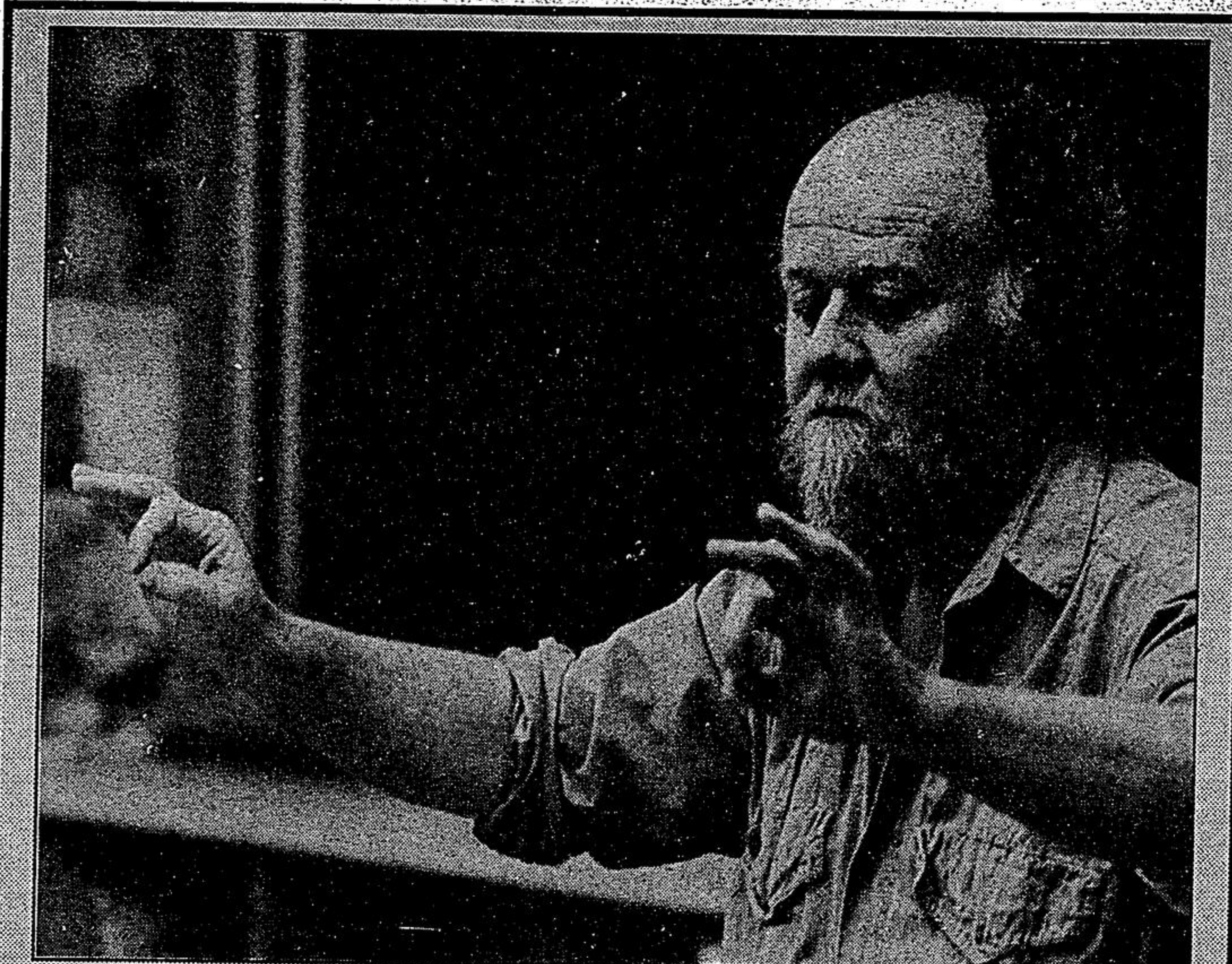
Durham Region works department assured Whitchurch-Stouffville Council in writing last week that a proposed new industrial park water system in Uxbridge would not affect local water supplies.

Council stressed concern to Uxbridge officials in December that the 117-acre Uxville Estates Industrial Park, to be developed along the eastern boundaries of the two communities, could affect some Stouffville homes.

But Durham Region has assured local politicians that a "safe yield flow" of water was established, resulting from a hydrogeological assessment and test drilling in 1989, and that "multi-level water depths were monitored at numerous observation points surrounding the test well location."

"There was minimal interference recorded in the surrounding observation wells for the 72-hour duration of the pumping test," the letter continued.

Durham Region, responsible for operation of the development, also assured Stouffville Council that if any local wells are "adversely affected" by the neighboring industrial park well supply, "the responsible party would be required to provide a potable water supply" to the Stouffville homeowners.



photo/ANNETTE BUCHKOWSKI

Conductor's call

The Uxbridge Chamber Choir was busy this week rehearsing for its upcoming performance in Uxbridge. Members are fine-tuning their talents before bringing the

show to local residents next month. Here, Chamber Choir Master Thomas Baker leads the group at the rehearsal, held at Joseph Gould Public School in Uxbridge.

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