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Teachers to vote on new deal

Elementary teachers to get details of tentative deal today after last minute break-through

By MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

At 6 a.m. yesterday morning, Harold Vigoda told the men and women woken by him two hours before that he had no news on a strike planned for public schools that day.

"I don't know whether you're going to work or whether you'll be picketing today," the union field secretary recalled saying to the 16 elementary teachers charged with informing their York Region colleagues by phone.

But one hour and 10 minutes later there was a deal: negotiators signed a tentative agreement at the Richmond Hill hotel where four days of talks had been extended half-hour by half-hour past a 4 a.m. deadline.

The public school board's chief negotiator was exhausted but said she remained confident even as a strike loomed closer. "I really believed there was an agreement in there. I believed there was an agreement for many months," said

Karen Barker.

Terms of the two-year deal with 3,300 members of two elementary federations are still secret. Vigoda said teachers will learn details this afternoon at a Unionville banquet hall and may vote to ratify the agreement as early as tomorrow.

"We believe the issue of preparation time — which was the only issue — has been resolved," he said from the unions' Thornhill strike office.

Principals at Stouffville public schools said the morning went smoothly yesterday, even though the board had advised people to have other arrangements ready to care for their children.

"It's a much happier tone in here today," added Catherine Keating at Whitchurch Highlands on Warden Ave. Children at Orchard Park Public School expressed relief and say they're happy to be in school, said principal John Hopkins.

A board hotline promised parents schools would be open and morning classes would resume "without interruption."

"The board would like to extend

its sincere appreciation to parents and the community for their understanding and patience throughout this period," the recorded message added. Just a few days earlier, board and union newspaper advertisements

were urging parents to call the opposite side in the dispute with their views.

Vigoda said relations with the board will take time to heal. "For many teachers, there will be an element of mistrust for some time to

come," he said.

As for the picket signs waiting at strike headquarters, "We think we're going to let the teachers keep them as a souvenir of an event that, thank god, never took place," Vigoda said.

Tories to vote on April 1

The Oak Ridges Progressive Conservatives will delay their nomination meeting until April 1.

While the local PCs had slotted March 24 as the day to choose a candidate, the date's been changed. About 300 Tories will chose between Sherri Walker, Allan Duffy and John Anderson.

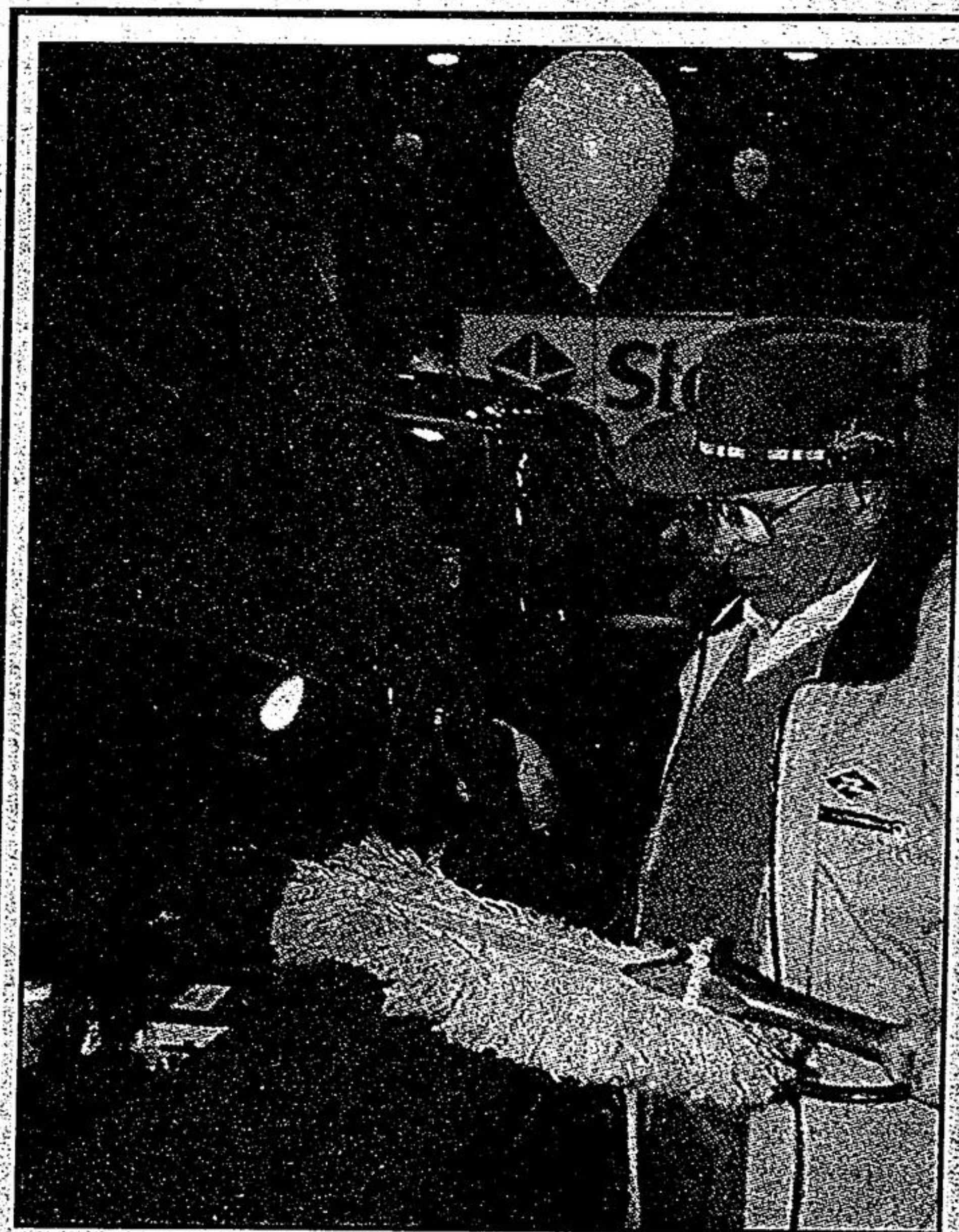
The nomination meeting will still be held at Leparc at Leslie Street and Highway 7, beginning at 7 p.m.

Last week, the Oak Ridges Liberals selected Bryon Wilfert to carry the Grit banner for this area in the next national election.

Both the local ridings Reformers and New Democrats are expected to announce nomination dates very soon.

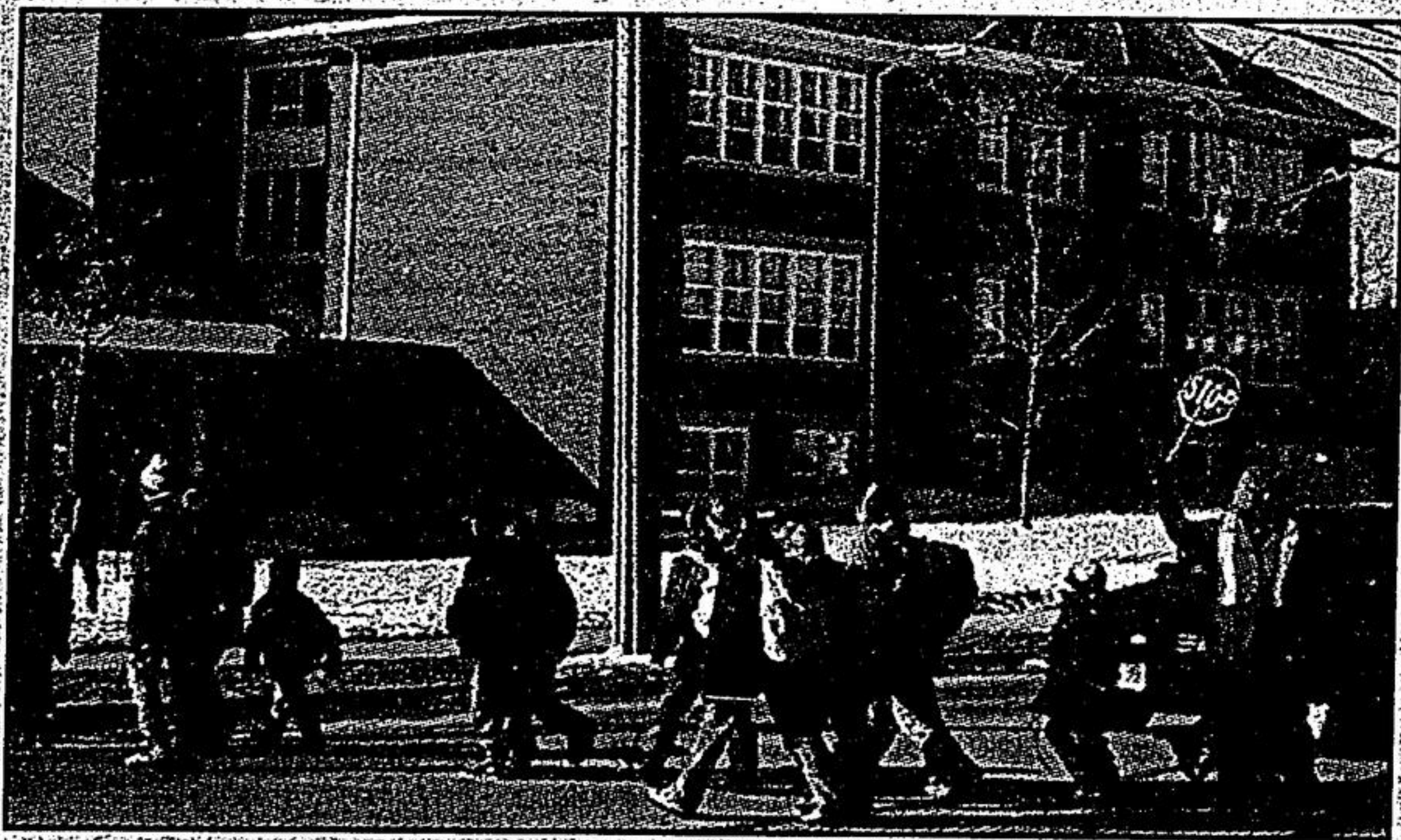
All federal parties are expecting an early June federal election.

Under country-wide redistribution, Oak Ridges, with a population of more than 102,000, takes in all of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Richmond Hill and the part of Markham lying north of 16th Avenue. As a result, on the federal scene — Stouffville is no longer coupled with Markham.



Polished home show

The Chamber of Commerce Home and Trade Show was a big hit on the weekend. Here, Peter Burdon of Stouffville Chrysler polishes up his display. Photo: SJOERD WITTEVEEN



Students hoping for a second March break Monday were trudging back to school after their teachers reached a tentative agreement with the York Region Board of Education.

Photo: STEVE SOMERVILLE

Man back in court April 2

A Downsview man, charged in connection with the death of a Stouffville teenager, will return to court on April 2.

Tonino Iafrate, 23, was charged with impaired driving causing death after 16-year-old Darlene O'Blenes of Muselman's Lake died of injuries soon after the Aug. 28, 1996 single vehicle accident.

Police allege Iafrate was the driver of the vehicle that went out of control on the Ninth Line.

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