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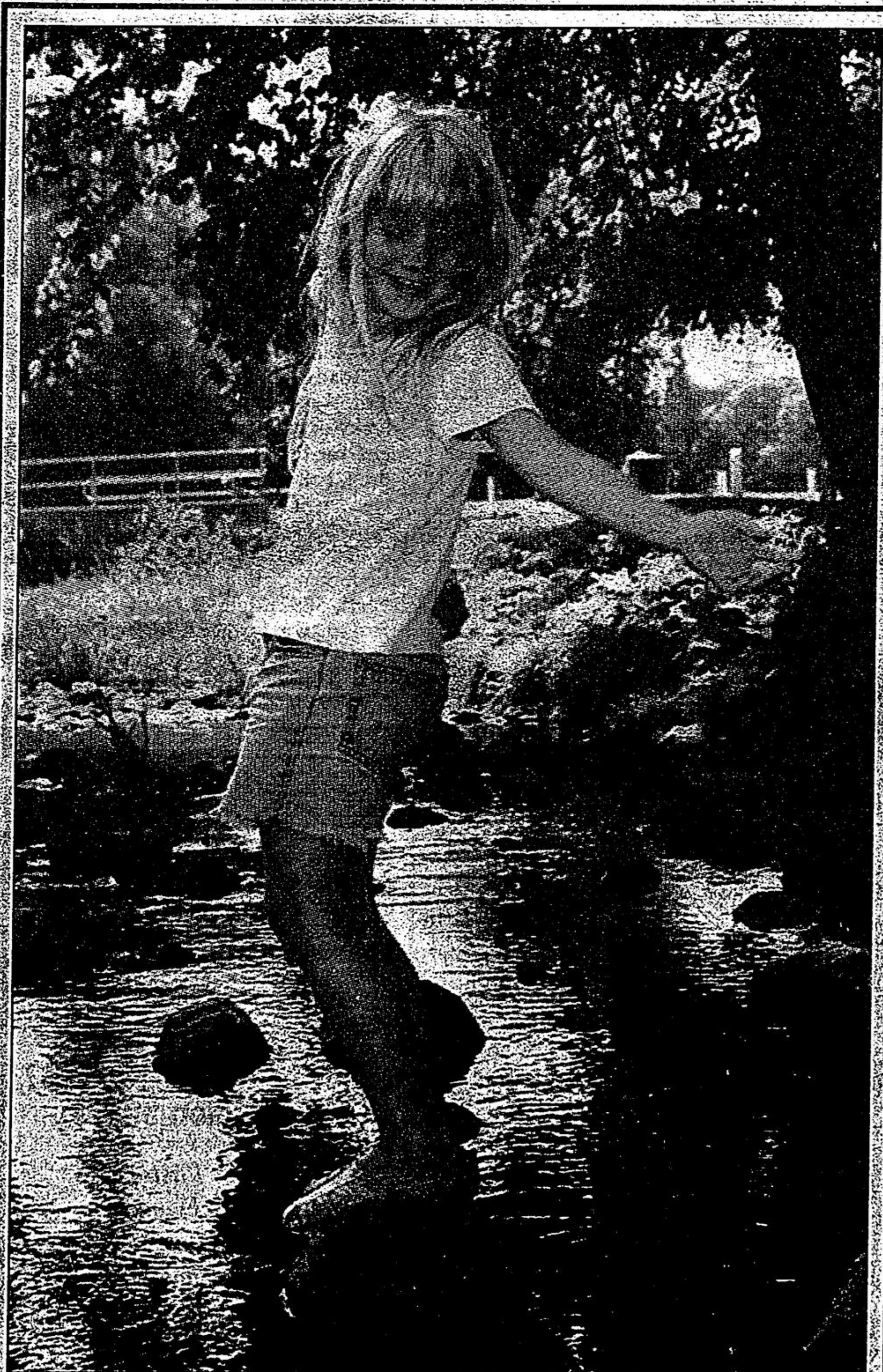


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Jam Session

Hydro gives back to community...page 3



SPORTS
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ROCK WALK: Chelsea Brand spent Saturday morning rock hopping across the cool waters of the creek at Memorial Park with some friends.

Photo by LORI EMMERSON

Drought takes toll on 'dry' Stouffville

JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Reporter

Drought conditions have prompted an urgent plea from the Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire Department: People are being asked "not to light fires" outdoors.

A rash of grass fires on the weekend not only kept the local fire department busy, they're also raising a marked safety concern.

If the dry spell continues, people and property could be at risk, local deputy fire chief Murray Emmerson stressed.

Emmerson is urging people to not light fires when cleaning up their property, or for any other reason.

"We're asking people to be mindful of the drought and how dangerous it can be," said Emmerson.

While no one was injured in any of the incidents over the weekend, fires destroyed trees and threatened crops.

One stubborn grass fire on Hwy. 48, south of

Bloomington, claimed two 25-foot pine trees. "It was so dry. The fire spread so fast. The trees burned before anything could be done. It's sad to see the trees go like this," said Emmerson.

Firefighters were called out to three separate grass fires on Hwy. 48 in a span of two days. "We had three spot fires on (Hwy.) 48. It's dry. It's such a worry," said Emmerson.

Also on the weekend, the local fire department responded to a grass fire on Greenwood Road. This fire threatened a crop. "It was burning right at the edge of a wheat field," said Emmerson.

The dry spell is taking its toll on just about everyone. Not only are firefighters and farmers being especially affected by the lack of rain, local residents are, once again, being strongly encouraged to follow the rules regarding the use of water.

In Whitchurch-Stouffville, the "odd-even" watering system is in place. It means that local

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Harris blinks for GTA mayors

KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Reporter

Ontario Premier Mike Harris indicated to six GTA mayors yesterday he was willing to show some flexibility on provincial downloading deadlines — but his goal of eliminating Ontario's deficit by the year 2000 remains as strong as ever.

And Harris agreed to set up a small task force, made up of municipal staff, to crunch the numbers — provincial numbers that have been wildly different than those quoted by regional staff.

Markham Mayor Don Cousens was one of the six, and the only York Region representative, who met with Harris and Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach at Queen's Park to discuss the province's plan to download more than \$660 million worth of new costs to

Ontario municipalities.

Also included were Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion and Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall.

"This was strictly a look at provincial downloading to municipalities," he said. "It is

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