

Munro backs legislation to repay parents

JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Reporter

Parents hit with extra child care costs linked to the recent teachers' strike will be able to recover up to \$40-a-day if legislation introduced yesterday at Queens Park gets approved.

Durham-York MPP Julia Munro is backing the new legislation which was presented by Labour Minister and Whitby MPP Jim Flaherty.

"The actions of the teachers' union created many unfortunate difficulties for Ontario's working families," said Flaherty.

The Fairness for Parents and Employees Act stipulates that a payment of up to \$40-a day per household for each day the schools were closed is be made

available to parents.

As well, the Act offers protection from dismissal or discipline for employees who were unable to work because of child-care responsibility during the strike.

The Act also gives protection from reprisals by teachers' unions against teachers who refused to participate in or support the province-wide strike.

"We are taking these measures to protect the rights and interests of parents and employees who were adversely affected by circumstances well beyond their control," said the labour minister.

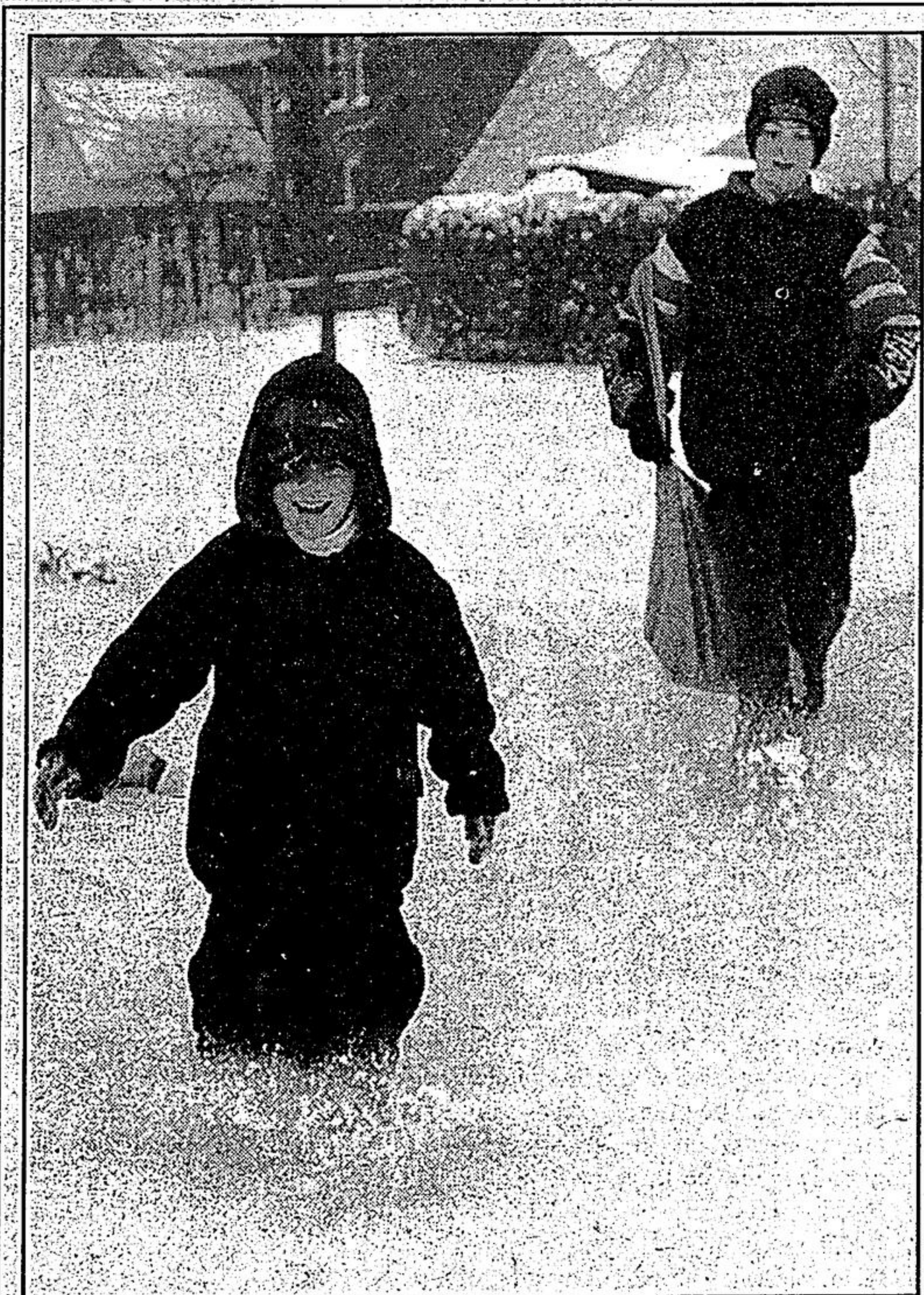
Application forms for the money will be available at area schools and at local board of education office.

If the legislation passes, the deadline to submit applications will be announced soon.



BETTER HURRY: Not your average igloo. Construction of this new house at the corner of William and Harold Streets continues on no matter what the weather. Here Bill Hughes, Gord Hamilton, Bob Hughes (in the basement), and Justin Howell (hauling lumber) of Hughes Brothers Construction work diligently amidst snowbanks and a light snowfall Friday afternoon.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE



TRAILBLAZERS: Marten Cushing and bigger brother Jeremy cut through a snowdrift while delivering *The Tribune* on Friday afternoon.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

Health officials fear worst

JENNIFER BROWN
Metroland Staff

York Region health officials are fearing the worst when the provincial panel that closed 10 Toronto hospitals last winter unveils its restructuring recommendations for hospitals in the 905 area code on Tuesday.

Although it is unlikely the Health Services Restructuring Commission will suggest hospital closures in York, there is speculation the region's three hospitals could lose millions in funding and be told to amalgamate their administrations.

The commission will present its report on York, Durham and Peel regions in Mississauga, after months of consultation.

But the GTA/905 Health Care Alliance, a group representing the 16 hospitals, suspects the committee entrusted to restructure health care in Ontario won't recognize the desperate need for growth funding.

GTA residents who live outside Toronto receive the lowest health care funding per person in the province. For every dollar spent elsewhere in Ontario, 905 communities receive only 70 cents.

According to the alliance, rapid growth in the communities it represents is primarily responsible for the gap in funding and service.

In York Region, hospitals have

sustained cutbacks of \$6 million during the last two years.

Meanwhile, the region's population will grow 31 per cent by 2003, taking the population to 833,000 up from 633,773 in 1995.

When the health review was announced in April, many health officials believed the study would lead to increasing funding.

But Jim Armstrong, executive director of the 905 hospital alliance, is unsure the restructuring commission will acknowledge the need for more money.

"Our big concern is that they recognize our unique high-growth situation so we will have equitable access to health care," said Armstrong.

"We are really concerned about whether they've heard that message loud and clear - that's the big question."

York County Hospital president Dan Carriere suggests the commission will recommend a funding cut because the financial figures used in the analysis are two years old.

Carriere said hospitals could lose between \$3 million to \$6 million - money the Ministry of Health provided during the past two years to address York's growth.

"It could negate all the gains we've made with growth funding," Carriere said.

Further to the fear of lost dollars

is the threat the commission will tell York hospitals to amalgamate their boards of directors and upper management.

But Armstrong doesn't believe the commission would go that far.

"People are wondering if they're looking at consolidation of administration and governance," said Armstrong. "But in an area like York Region, we have good-size hospitals that are far apart."

In Durham, Armstrong says hospital amalgamations are a possibility.

Carriere agrees, pointing out that the commission did not amalgamate staff at Toronto's university teaching hospitals or Scarborough's three hospitals, which are located just 15 minutes apart.

"You don't gain anything by amalgamating unless you're closing something behind you," said Carriere.

Even if administrations were combined, each hospital would still require a chief operating officer, he added.

"It might appease people who think getting rid of administration saves money," Carriere said. "But you'll end up getting the same costs, if not more - it's smoke and mirrors."

"If I'm not around as CEO, I'll be someplace else. But in the end, somebody has to run the place."

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