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Cinderella has a ball p. 16

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Confusion over notices

JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Reporter

The switchboard lit up at the Whitchurch-Stouffville municipal office after local ratepayers received their new assessment notices.

In the past 10 days, the town was hit with a rash of calls after Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves's department mailed out the notices, said town treasurer Ed Blackburn.

"We had four staff members on our phones and they never stopped," he said.

"What's this all about?" is the most asked question in reference to Current Value Assessment, the new method of updating assessments.

"We're directing all calls to the assessment department," said Blackburn. Instead of calling the local municipal office, call 1-800-263-3224.

The re-assessed value of property will now represent the estimated market value of the property as of June 30, 1996. The last time this was done was 1984. Meanwhile, some areas of Toronto's market values are tied to the 1940s.

People are confused. The confusion has erupted as homeowners across Whitchurch-Stouffville get their first look at how their properties have been assessed under the reformed property tax system.

Some are stunned by jumps in their property assessments. They wonder: Will it mean higher taxes? And the concerns are valid,

said Blackburn. Local home and business owners should pay close attention to the assessments, he said. They should be concerned. They should look and see how comparable properties have been assessed and yes, they should be very aware of the appeal process.

An open house linked to the assessments is slated for March 9 and 11 from noon to 8 p.m. at the Ballantrae Community Centre.

The open house will give property owners a chance to present new information or correct misunderstanding regarding the assessment, said Mayor Wayne Emmerson. The package that came in the mail explains it well. People should read it, re-read it and come to the open house in Ballantrae. "I can't stress enough how important this is," said Emmerson.

"Of course, people want to know what their 1998 tax rate is," said Blackburn. And people want the answer now.

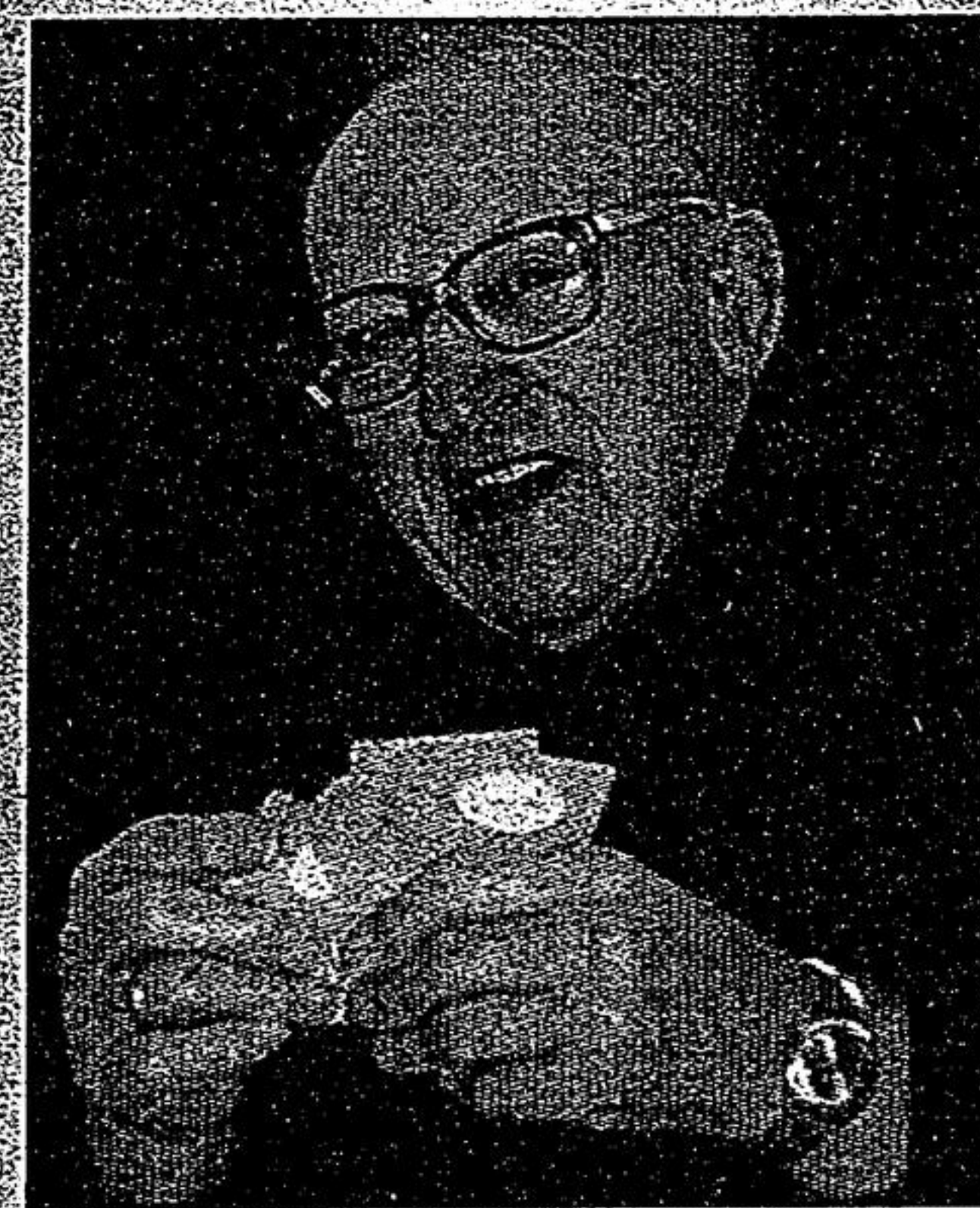
The municipal tax rate won't be set by local council until mid-March, while York region's budget may not be set until June, said Blackburn. "And who knows when the province will deal with school board (taxes)," he added.



Poker faces?

These seniors were playing a game of Pepper at the Silver Jubilee Club in Stouffville on Feb. 12 and by the looks of it having a ball. Cardsharps are: Elsie Reader, above; Clayton Gayman, top right; and Clarence Fockler, right.

Photos by STOERD WITTEVEEN



YR cop serves SIU with \$30M suit

KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Reporter

The police officer who shot and killed a Markham teen in a stolen car during the summer of 1996 has filed a \$30 million lawsuit

against the Special Investigations Unit and the province, claiming malicious, politically-motivated prosecution.

York Regional Police Detective Bob Wiche is claiming his rights under the Charter were breached by the lengthy SIU investigation and the subsequent laying of a manslaughter

charge, said his lawyer Adrian Hill.

The claim was filed in Toronto Wednesday. The SIU and its employer, the Province of Ontario, acted "negligently" and "abusively," not only in the laying of the charge, but also because it took six months to investigate the

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