

INSIDE: Opinion... 6
 Calendar... 10
 Scoreboard... 14
 Classified... 15

13 Stouffville Spirit hit the links in annual fun golf tournament. Catch the action in sports.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

EVENT: Music Mania '99 planning meeting
WHEN: Wednesday, Sept. 9 at 7:30 p.m.
WHERE: Stouffville United Church

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library



12 Simon Birch, born no bigger than a baby bird, believes God has big plans for him.

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Stouffville Tribune

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TO REACH US: (905) 640-2100

TAXES: MPP blames region for ignoring tools

Businesses 'will sink' under tax burden

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
 STAFF WRITER

Facing severe tax hikes, Stouffville's business community is doing a double take.

Some commercial and industrial tax increases are far exceeding 100 per cent.

Ballantrae Stone & Stove owner Tony Muscat said huge tax hikes could mean the end for some owners.

"This kind of an increase will sink some of our businesses," Muscat said.

Last year, Muscat's property tax bill was \$7,783. This year, it's \$17,770. "I'm looking at a \$10,000 increase," he said. "Because of hard work, I am able to pay it, but I'm worried about others."

Still, Muscat is going through the assessment appeal process, which has just been extended to the end of October.

A process is currently being put in place to help deal with hardship cases, said Durham-York MPP Julia Munro.

Still, switchboards continue to light up at Munro's Ballantrae office, at Whitchurch-Stouffville's municipal headquarters and at the local Chamber of Commerce.

Tax bill after shock is so bad, a political meeting of the minds took place a few days ago.

Now that property owners have their tax bills, reality is sinking in.

Mayor Wayne Emmerson is getting an earful. "I'm hearing horror stories," said Emmerson. "Some (taxes) are up 100, some 150 per cent."

See REGION, page 3.

END OF SEASON GARDENING



STAFF PHOTO/SIGERD WITTEVEEN

Head gardener Erin Shiel and helpers Krista Danylkiw and Erin Johnson clip dead buds from the portulacas in the Emerald Hills Golf and Country Club parking lot Thursday.

Teachers return; plan strike action

Elementary teachers to take vote

BY JENNIFER BROWN
 STAFF WRITER

Rotating strikes and work to rule are some of the options elementary school teachers in York Region were considering as they headed back to class this morning.

The first day of school for the region's 50,000 elementary students resumed, business as usual. But for how long regular instruction will continue is unknown, as teachers prepare to take a strike vote, possibly this week.

"We are going to have to go to the members and get a strike vote and we are in the process of doing that. School will be open but we will be moving fairly closely in that direction, as quick as we can," said Pam Gillan, local president of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario. "We're doing the ground work to get mobilized."

Contract talks between elementary teachers and the school board broke off last week and the board proceeded to reduce teacher preparation time from 160 minutes to 120 to work within the new government funding levels. At one time, local elementary teachers had 200 minutes of prep time, used to plan classes and mark student work.

Trustees voted Sept. 2 to alter the terms and conditions of the existing contract with the 2,760 public elementary teachers.

"We simply cannot afford the cost of continuing the old contract because of the salary scale," said Karen Barker, chairperson of the board's negotiation advisory committee.

New funding allocations from the province, along with mandated expectations for class sizes, make it impossible to continue the old collective agreement, Barker.

The board says it would need an additional \$9 million to hire 140 teachers and meet the union's demands.

Following the breakdown in talks, the union met this week to discuss what course of action it will take. Gillan said

See BOARD, page 2.

Rosa Dixon
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