

Expansions in the works to meet community's needs

FROM PAGE 11

Newmarket residents Julie and Victor Kranitz-Andrade agree.

"The population is far exceeding the type of services a hospital such as York County can offer if the province isn't going to throw more money at it," said Victor, who had his first real experience with the hospital when his son Charlie was born there in May.

The age of York County also surprised Julie, but she says it didn't affect her care.

"It's old, but it had everything we needed," she said of the unit that was first built in 1945.

At the same time, Julie sympathized with the nursing staff who were run off their feet.

"It's not their fault — they're understaffed.

It's the closest thing to slave labour," she said.

Charlie was among the last babies born in the hospital's old delivery unit — York County now has a new \$2.2-million facility.

And the services for family care are beyond what was available in the Montreal communities Julie and Victor grew up in. And Julie gives high marks to the community health-care programs for young mothers.

Providing those programs is a challenge, especially when, for years, York Region's public health department received the lowest per capita funding of all health units in the province.

That was until last year when, after a long drought, regional council approved a 12-per cent increase in the public health budget.

"They knew we had important growth issues," said Dr. Helena Jaczek, the medical

officer of health.

"Obviously, council only approves a year at a time, but there is an indication residents need more resources," said Jaczek.

But even when funding is forthcoming, implementing change is not always easy.

When the province recognized the need for additional services for the elderly, the money was welcomed, but a strategy on how to spend the money wasn't there.

"The ministry is providing funding, but we don't have the internal planning capability to take advantage of new funds," said Jaczek. "We have wonderful health care aides and RPNs, but when it comes to determining where the best place would be for a day program, some of those studies haven't been done yet."

And health care isn't always confined to

hospitals and clinical services.

"Where are the bike paths and the walking trails?" Jaczek asked. "I'm just as interested in pushing forward those programs. We have to consider length of life and quality of life and for the majority of our community to be sitting in traffic with stress levels isn't positive at all."

Other challenges that face the region's health care system:

- Transportation — individual transit systems across the region make it difficult for patients without cars to access regional services, for example, dialysis, eating disorder clinics, etc.

- Need for increased services for the elderly. The population of those over the age of 75 in York Region rose by 34 per cent in 1996.

Dr. Ken Lawlor

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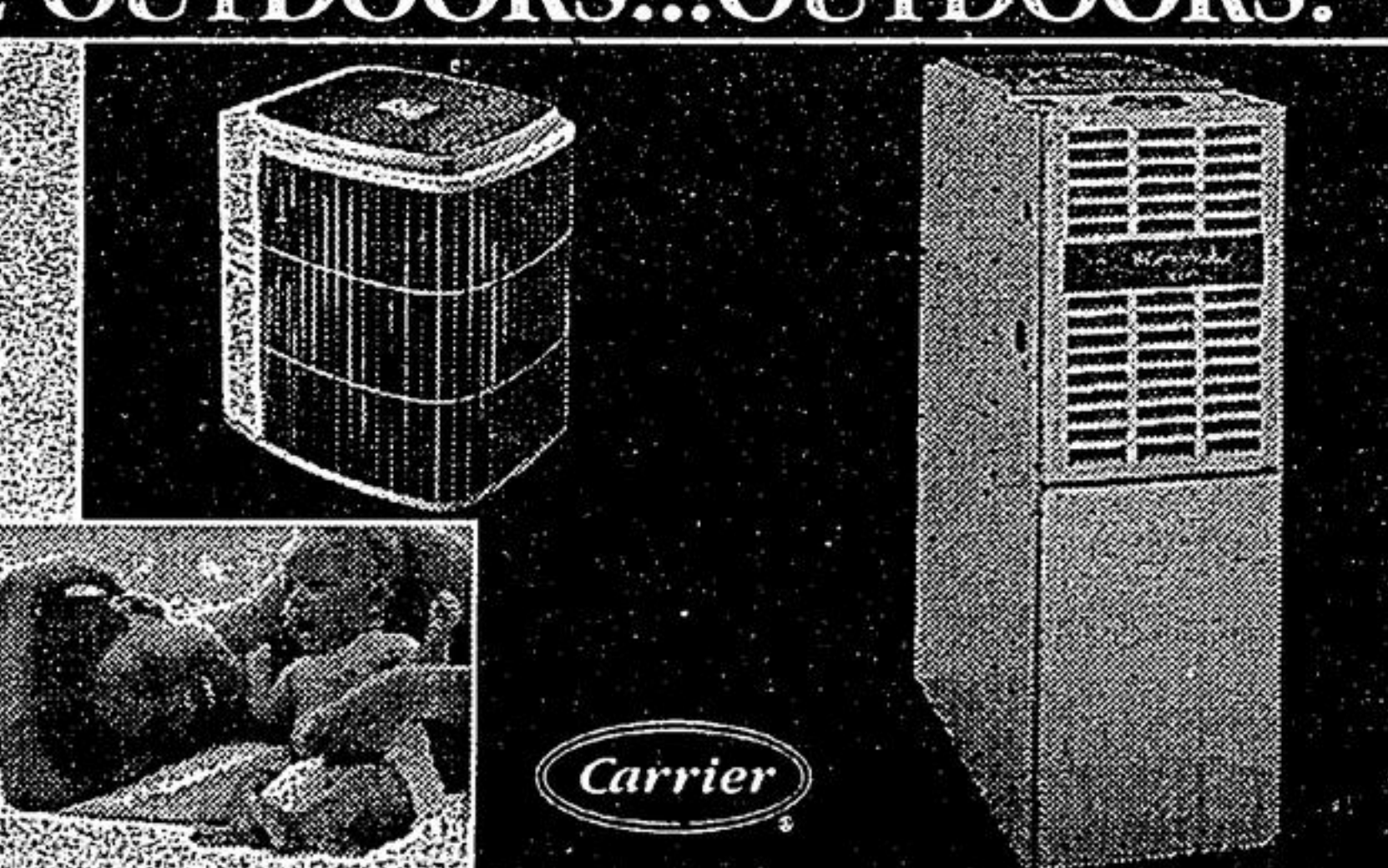
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