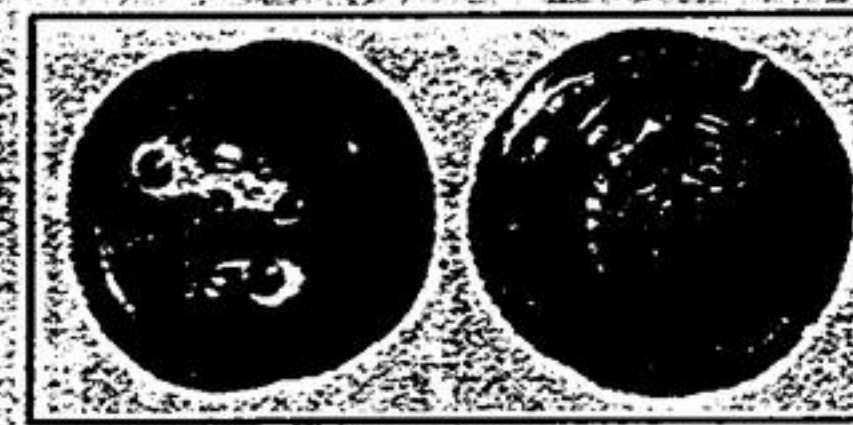


**INSIDE:** Opinion... 6  
 Issues... 12  
 Career Fair... 13  
 Classified... 20

**19** Spirit of Stouffville are on the verge of being eliminated by the Collingwood Blues.

**ARTS & CULTURE CALENDAR**

**EVENT:** Music Mania auction and dance  
**WHEN:** Tonight at 7 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Royal Canadian Legion hall, Ninth Line



**17** Yo-yo sales are quickly spinning out of control - after years of sleeping.

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## Criteria too strict for tax break, seniors say

*Peace offering called slap in the face*

BY LISA QUEEN  
STAFF WRITER

York Region council is offering an olive branch to seniors and disabled residents afraid of losing their homes under Ontario's new property tax system.

But some homeowners complain the strict criteria to qualify for the tax deferral program makes the peace offering more like a slap in the face.

They're upset council ignored their request to phase in residential tax increases over three or more years. Instead, critics accuse the region of offering an inadequate program for a select few.

Under the plan approved Thursday, eligible seniors and disabled residents will be able to defer paying tax increases of \$300 or more caused by reassessment of their properties.

To qualify, homeowners must prove annually they are disabled or 55 years old or older, and that their income is less than \$23,000 for a single person or less than \$40,000 for a family.

In addition, eligible seniors and disabled residents won't have to pay interest on the deferred portion of their taxes until Dec. 31, 2005. After that, they will be charged the prime interest rate plus 0.5 per cent.

Regional politicians admit the plan isn't perfect, but estimate as many as 9,150 properties will benefit.

They insist phasing in tax increases would hurt other homeowners or

See TAX, page 7.

**POOL/LIBRARY COMPLEX:** Citizen's group aims to put an end to South Park project

## Fighting city hall

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
STAFF WRITER

A citizens' campaign to stop construction of the \$5-million library/indoor swimming pool complex has been launched.

Despite the fact the town expects to select a project architect by March 23 for a June construction start, a citizens' group wants to stop the project altogether.

People are invited to voice concerns at a public meeting on

Wednesday, March 10 at Latham Hall starting at 7:30 p.m.

Meeting organizer Jim Priebe wants to find out if residents are opposed to the project, which was passed by council two weeks ago. A petition will be available to sign at the meeting, Priebe said.

"The purpose of the meeting is to... find ways to stop this project in its current form, legally, peacefully, democratically, but stop it nonetheless," he said.

Council plans to move the

public library to the new site but Priebe's goal is to convince council to leave the library where it is and "to insist that any new pool be properly planned and studied, involving significant public input, before it is approved by council."

Priebe said he does not believe the approval decision is "either supported by the majority of residents or in the best interests of this town."

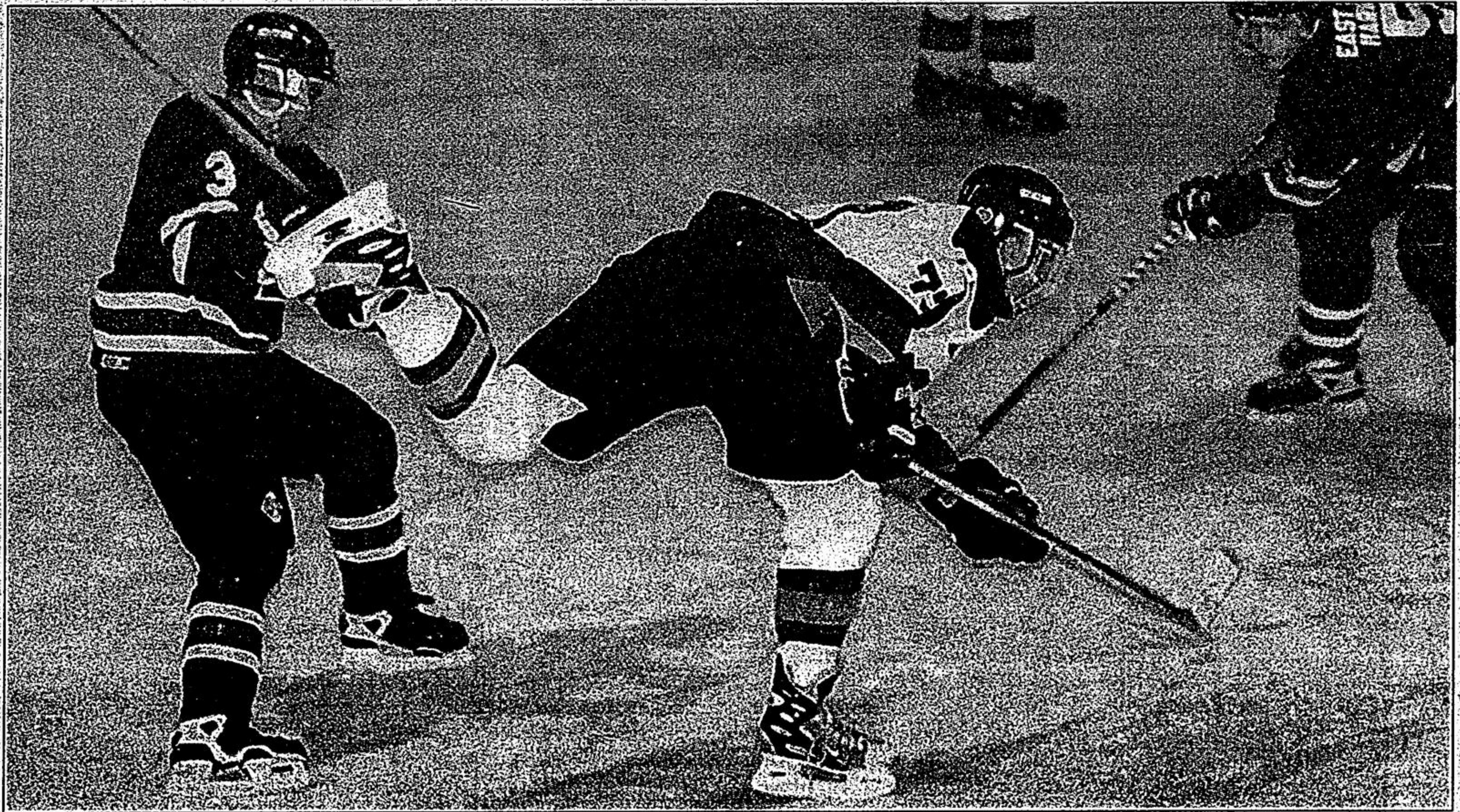
Council meetings to discuss the project had become so out-of-

control Mayor Wayne Emmerson initiated a code of conduct.

Priebe stressed the upcoming citizen meeting, however, will be orderly.

"There will be some ground rules," Priebe said.

"Verbal and physical abuse of others... will not be tolerated. Let's take our frustration and anger and use it productively. Let's send a strong message to council that we want a change in decision."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

### TRIPPED UP

Collingwood Blues' Eric Filiatrault, left, trips up Spirit captain Phil Barski during the first period of Thursday's Provincial Junior A Hockey League playoff games at the rec centre. The Blues won the game 3-1 and are 2-0 in a five-game first round series.

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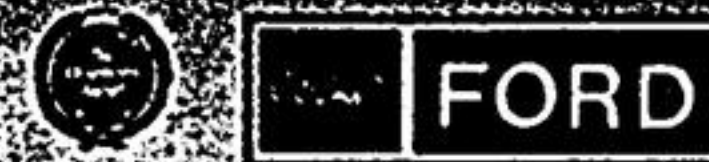
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