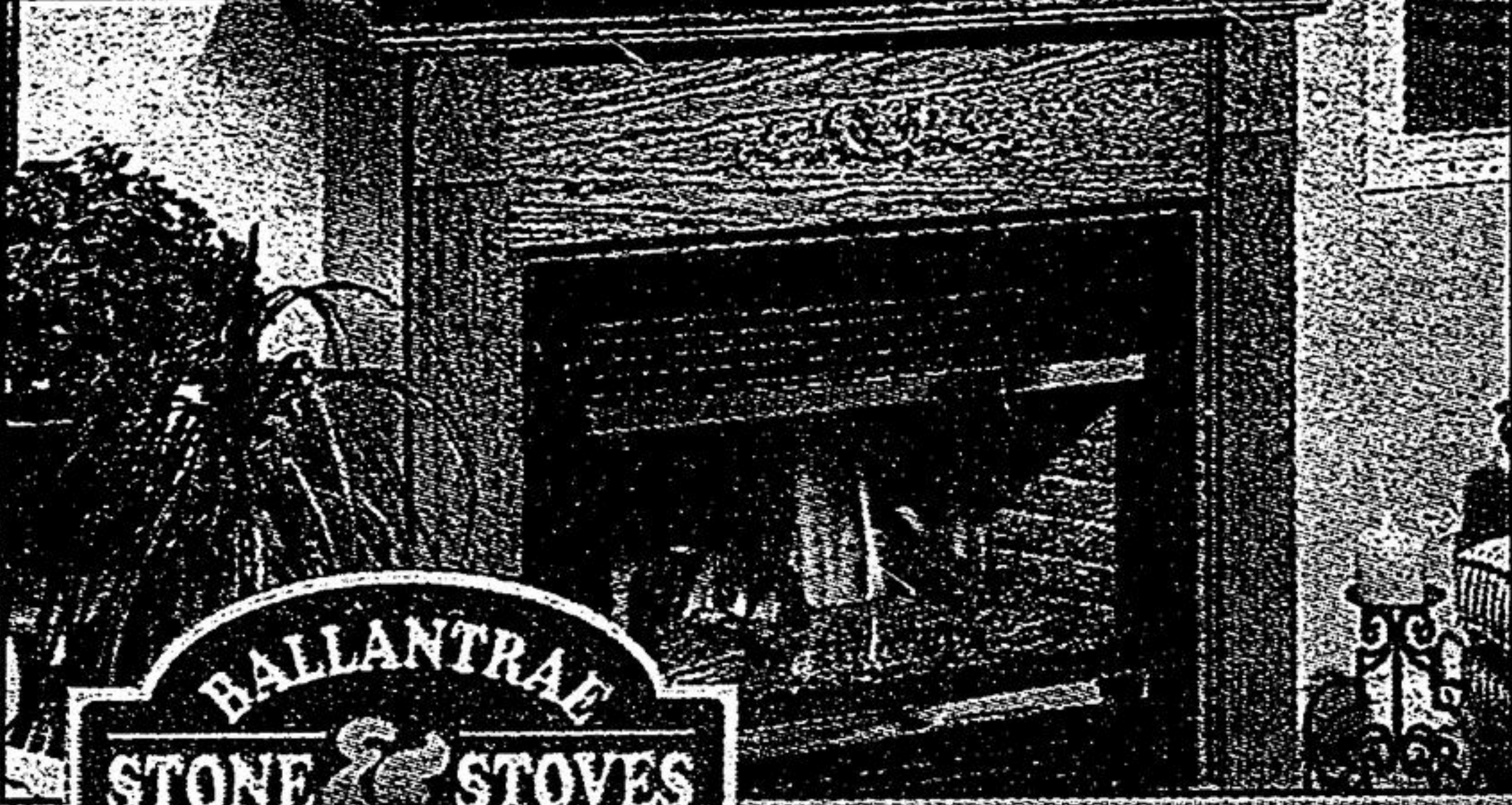


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This message brought to you as a community service of The Economist/Tribune

## Wood chip warnings circulated

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

By mid-afternoon Thursday, the pizzas had gone cold and snow swirled thick outside the basement of St. John's Anglican Church in Oak Ridges. But the volunteers kept filling packets and twisting on their warnings.

Already, 4,000 "wood chip warnings" on the fate of the Oak Ridges Moraine in Richmond Hill stood assembled in shopping bags. Before 5 p.m. Saturday, if their plan was to work, there would have to be 16,000 more.

Taking a break, Peter Martin handed a visitor lists of campaign contributions to municipal politicians, information he and wife Jean ferreted out from town halls across the region.

"It just gives you an idea of where the money comes from that gets these people elected," the Queensville resident

said. "My wife's very good at this. She's very persistent and thorough."

She was close by, too, using a hole punch to prepare the "Going, going, gone!" message on packets of wood chips a small army of environmentalists hope to deliver to every house in Richmond Hill next week.

"I've got this down to a science now. I'm going so fast," she said.

Meanwhile, Olga Smith of Stouffville was getting "chip picky," putting chips into the packets. "After the first 200 you just stop counting, you know?"

But she persisted, as did Christiane Leitz, the woman to her right twisting them shut. "I think my quality of life is being impinged on," Leitz, a resident of Richmond Hill for 12 years said, as Martin set down a new boxful wafting with the smell of a recently cut forest. "It's the closest place for us to get to open space, open land, where there's still forests and nature."

Leitz came to the town's Jan. 12 council meeting, probably the most crowded in Richmond Hill history, because she received one of 4,000 packets handed to local residents. "I'm not an activist or whatever you call it."


This time, several groups are involved in a much larger, grassroots campaign to fill a ballroom Feb. 23 at the Sheraton Parkway Hotel, where the town's plan to urbanize its remaining rural moraine land is again up for scrutiny.

Organizers are calling members of the Richmond Hill Naturalists, people who signed a petition or anyone else they can tap as volunteers to spread the chips through neighbourhoods.

"A couple of hundred would probably get it done," said Jean Jackson of Scarborough, one of the volunteer coordinators. "Then nobody would be distributing over too big an area."

The organizers hope the effort will change the minds of Richmond Hill councillors. It's not what Peter Martin expects to see happen, but he kept pouring chips in baggies. "You've got to take a stand sometimes."

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