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8 Replica handguns are so lifelike they strike fear in the hearts of cops and victims.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

EVENT: Earth Week nature walk
WHEN: Sunday, 1:30 p.m.
WHERE: Finch Meander, (416) 282-9983



10 Is our water being taken for granted as troubling warning signs surface around us?

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REGIONS ASK PROVINCE TO CAP FUNDS POOLED FOR TORONTO'S SOCIAL PROGRAMS

No extra cash for Toronto: GTA

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

York Region and its neighbours across Greater Toronto will ask the provincial government to cap the amount of money they have to send to Toronto to help pay for the city's social assistance and housing needs.

In the past three years, the region has committed \$263 million

to Toronto, including \$80 million in its 2000 operating budget.

However, along with the regions of Halton, Durham and Peel, local officials fear a severe economic dip will return a crunch to the social assistance framework similar to the experience in 1993, when York Region's caseload reached 9,485 a month, almost double the figures from last year.

On Thursday, the region's finance committee endorsed a recommendation drafted by Peel Region requesting a cap be placed on the GTA's pooling responsibilities and requesting all municipalities submit costs determined on common service levels.

But convincing City of Toronto politicians to join the debate will be another matter entirely.

"We have had informal talks about this with Toronto (But) Toronto wants to see more and more money coming to them out of our end," regional chairperson Bill Fisch admitted following the meeting. "It has to stop."

Since 1998, the GTA regions have directed money to Toronto.

See NO SAY, page 12.

Boards aim to avert repeat of chaos

Death threats force two schools to close

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

Two Thornhill schools were closed Thursday after students stayed away in droves on the anniversary of the Columbine High massacre.

At least two more schools, Newmarket High School and Alexander Mackenzie High in Richmond Hill, were evacuated Thursday due to bomb threats. A bomb threat had been called in to Huron Heights in Newmarket the day before.

There was a police presence in Toronto schools Thursday, and five students were stabbed at an Ottawa area high school.

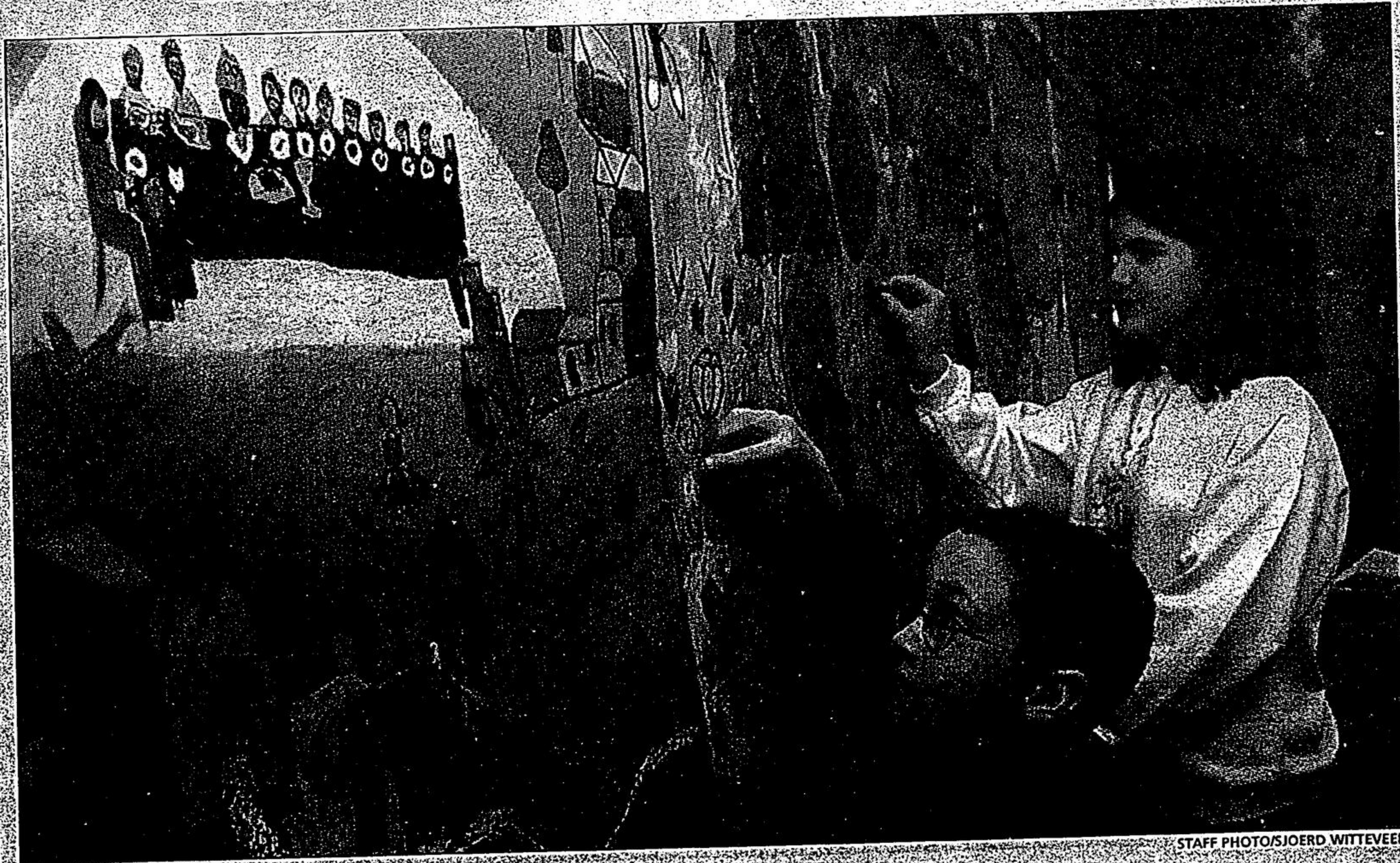
Although school officials say there are no guarantees, they hope to prevent a repeat of this chaos next April 20.

"I don't know that anybody can give assurances to stop that kind of thing," Brian Jamieson, spokesperson for the York Region District School Board, conceded. "We're going to review what's been going on in the last few days and say, 'What are we going to learn from this?'"

The York Catholic school board was one of the first in the province to introduce a Safe Schools Policy, said spokesperson Chris Cable.

"It has a system in place to handle any emergency. There is a protocol to follow for any of these situations," she said.

See AVOID, page 12.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

THE TRUE MEANING OF EASTER

Nick Pesnyak and Brenda Marano, both 10, put the finishing touches on a wall painting in their Grade 5 St. Mark Catholic School classroom. The artwork was done during Lent, the pre-Easter fasting period. The painting depicts Jesus' life during Holy Week.

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