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# Mould, water troubles mean it's time to examine how things work

Mould in the schools, E coli in the water, creepy crawling things showing up in private wells and talk of privatizing the province's water and sewer system reminds us that we're living in changing if not questionable times.

Mould will make you sneeze and wheeze, E coli and other germs will make you gag and die and handing over our water and sewer operation to the private sector should make you worry.

Court workers in Newmarket are doing their best to put the guilty in jail and keep the innocent out.

Meanwhile, construction workers do their best to solve the courthouse mould problem.

Criminals are the least of our worries. When mould turned up in the courthouse walls, remedial action was eventually initiated.

Today, justice is being dished out in makeshift courts. Our judges are conducting business in cramped trailers and borrowed offices.

Mould is turning up everywhere. This past week, York Region public school board officials scrambled to clean up mould recently uncovered in portables. It affected nearly 300 students at Milliken Mills High School.

I don't know much about building things. I know less about electrical or plumbing matters, but the first time I



Joan Ransberry

stepped inside a portable classroom in the mid 1970s, I sensed that the little school away from the main school would be subject to dampness. And dampness spells mould.

However, I didn't know then that mould could threaten the health of my fourth child, a severe asthmatic.

Today, we know that exposure to mould can trigger severe asthma attacks.

Twenty-five years ago I didn't know that an increase in asthma attacks was linked to my son's classroom.

As for E coli, the situation in Walkerton has turned into a sad joke, reminding us all that we can't be too cautious.

We've all learned that we can't turn our backs and leave uneducated, unskilled Good-Time Charlies in charge of water.

And, while people killed by E coli

force us to focus on municipal water, who's in charge of the six million private wells in rural Canada?

Lots of unhealthy stuff is finding its way into them. Some of the trouble source is nearby farms.

We should be careful with this hands-off approach to the agriculture industry.

Chemicals and other questionable things from farm fields find their way into private wells. While a great majority of farmers are safety conscious, some aren't.

Why are we treating the issue of privatizing water and sewer systems with silence?

Maybe the situation would be worse if profit-driven companies operated water and sewer treatment plants.

There are 600 water systems in Ontario. Will the right-wing mind set in the Premier's office turn this lucrative business over to their friends in the private sector?

The Harris government makes a habit of discrediting public institutions and services, then creating the impression there is a crisis and hoping the electorate will accept radical change as a solution.

There's plenty to worry about. At times, I long for the days when we were told not to sit on a toilet seat and, of course, never told why.

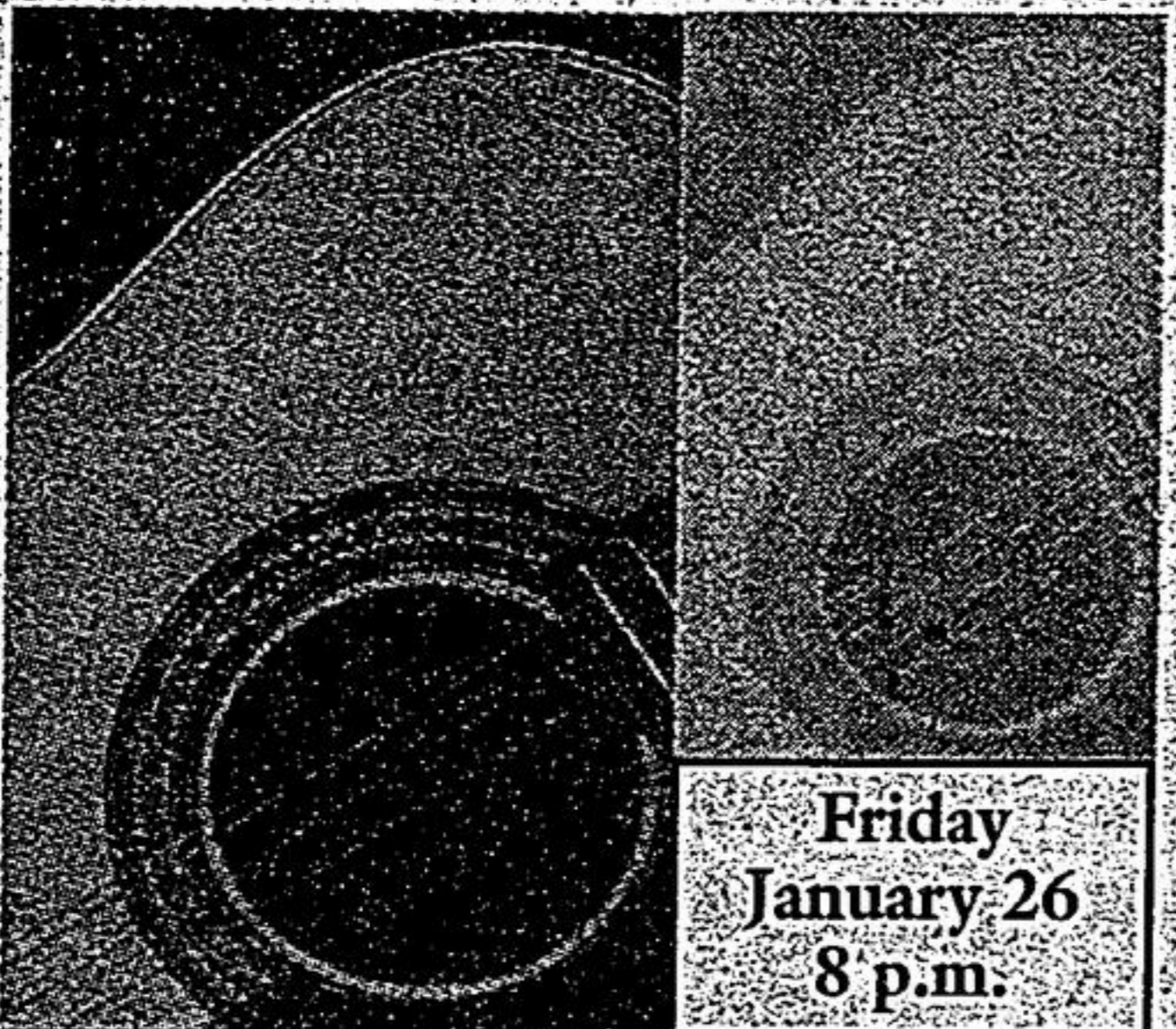
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