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3 The Ontario-wide shortage of nurses is taking its toll in York Region's hospitals.

ARTS & CULTURE CALENDAR

EVENT: BIA and Friends Winter Carnival
WHEN: Saturday, Feb. 17, 12-4 p.m.
WHERE: Downtown Stouffville (640-0749)

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library



18 The etiquette of the cell phone call - and the legislation to make it safer.

SERVING WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE SINCE 1888

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BUILDING BOOM HITS 'HOME' IN THE REGION

Low prices, mortgage rates help buyers

BY PATRICK CASEY
 Staff Writer

It's been 14 years since York Region has witnessed a residential building boom; this significant

Home builders established an all-time record last year as annual sales reached 41,475 units across the GTA, breaking the previous record set in 1986.

And the region was front and centre in the construction surge, with 11,878 homes sold in 2000, an 8-per-cent increase over 1999. Another 1,006 housing units started last year, bringing the current housing supply under construction to 9,142 units.

With more than 600 building sites spread out across the GTA, Greater Toronto Home Builders Association president Patrick O'Hanlon said relatively low prices and mortgage rates combined with an unbelievable range of choice to encourage consumers to opt for new homes.

"Whether buyers were looking for a new condominium apartment or a new single detached home, whether they wanted to live in the city or the suburbs, they were able to find the home they were looking for at the price they could afford," O'Hanlon explained.

"Going back to the beginning of 2000, we expected a good year. It has been a very stable market.

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Kim in a spin



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Kimberley Hord, 14, of the Stouffville Figure Skating Club, practices a jump Tuesday at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Recreation Complex, in preparation for her dance test next Tuesday. The club runs skating lessons for children of all ages at the arena in Stouffville.

Farmers tell MPs they're in crisis

Get business plan for farms: Gormley farmer in Ottawa

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
 Staff Writer

Agriculture has a \$95-billion economic impact on Canada, but it happens without a business plan.

According to Gormley farmer John Doner, it doesn't make any sense to continue without a national policy. And he's joined dozens of producers from across Canada in taking that message to Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

"Canada is the only G7 country without a farm policy," said Doner. "Any corporate executive with his act together and his life in order operates with a business plan. We (farmers) desperately need a workable national agriculture policy. Without one there is no future."

In particular, the Canadian farmers want parity with American producers, who they say receive government subsidies. It's a position supported by Oak Ridges Liberal MP Bryon Wilfert. "The farmers want a level playing field," said Wilfert. "We should work towards the call for parity."

Doner and York Region farmers John Holtrop, Bruce Pearson and Don Chapman abandoned their farms today to stand on the steps of the House of Commons in protest. Other York Region farmers attended a similar rally in Ottawa on Monday.

They've been joined by producers from across the country, marking what they say is the first time in Canadian history that farmers from the east and the west came together in a united front. They're describing how declining

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TAKES
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