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7 Joan Ransberry: The grinch who stole Christmas presents from our columnist.

SPORTS CALENDAR

EVENT: Stouffville Spirit vs. Trinec Czech Republic
WHEN: Wednesday, Dec. 19, 7:30 p.m.
WHERE: Stouffville Arena (see story on page 27)



24 Been There, Done That: Taking her best shot with the York County Bowmen.

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Preserving Stouffville's Duffins Creek

'Improving' stream a rare gem in the GTA

BY MIKE ADLER
 Staff Writer

Duffins Creek, a creek watershed in very good health, is at its worst beside Bob Busato's business in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

L & M Gardens just happens to be downstream on Stouffville Creek from where the town's sewage treatment plant discharges its chlorine-treated water.

Because of the high amounts of chloride added by the treatment, Busato, who runs the 10th Line nursery with brothers Frank and Jim, doesn't dare use the creek water on L & M's spring annuals or other crops.

Busato has noticed the creek he once walked on for miles in winter no longer freezes in the coldest weather.

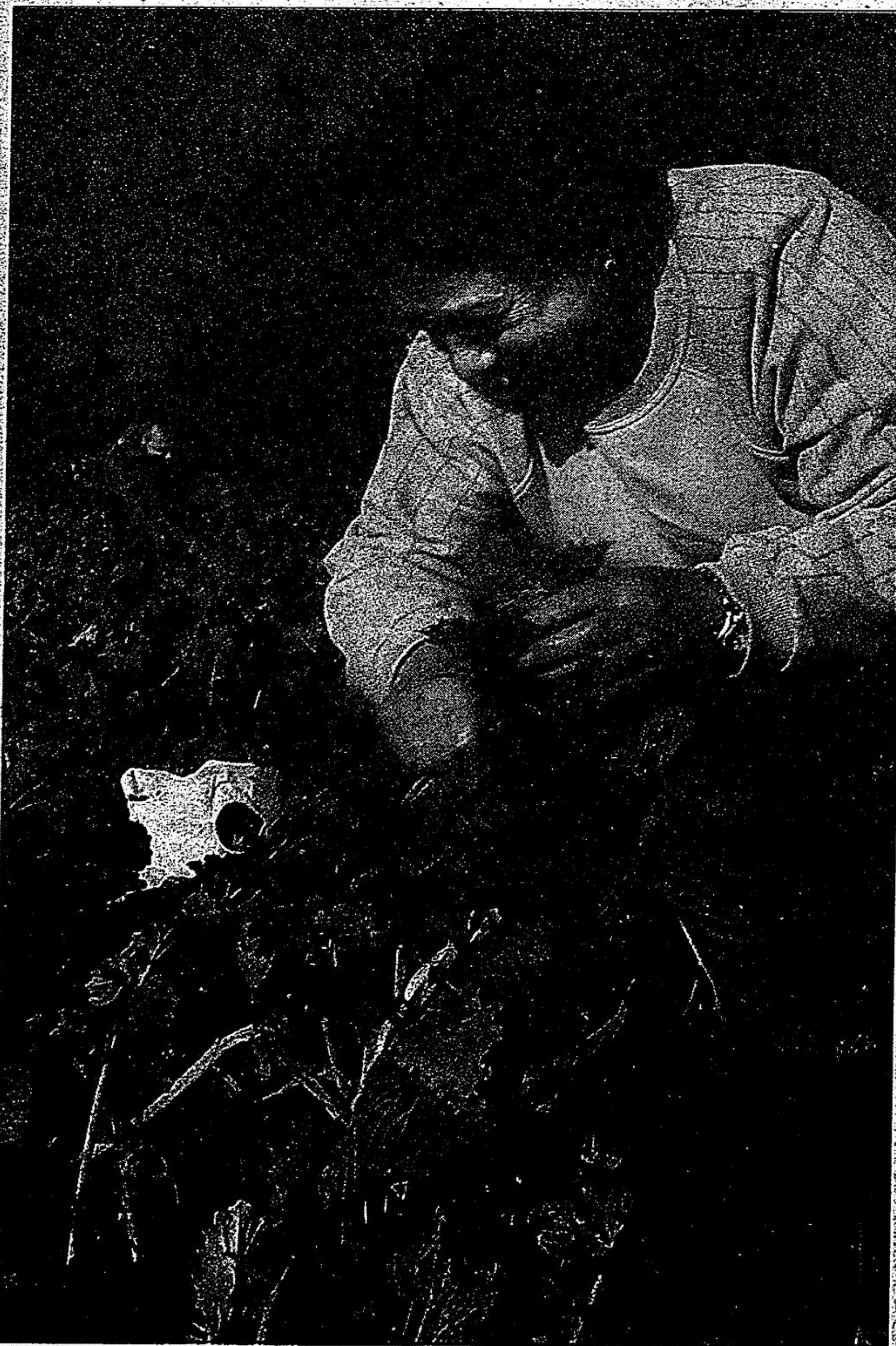
"I would not let animals drink out of it," he added this week.

Duffins Creek is a rare thing in the Greater Toronto Area, a natural system whose health has improved for decades because it has been left largely alone.

But much of York Region's small contribution to the watershed in eastern Whitchurch-Stouffville and Markham is in the worst shape of the Duffins' many streams, a fact not lost on Whitchurch-Stouffville Councillor Mark Carroll.

On Monday night, in Stouffville's new pool-library

It beats shovelling snow



STAFF PHOTO/SIOERD WITTEVEEN

Harvesting in December? Yes, thanks to the unusually warm weather, Louis and Ida Firino of Scarborough pick a second growth of rapini at Tavco farms on Hwy. 48 just south of Stouffville on Monday morning. For more on the unseasonable temperatures, see page 20.

NOT MAKING THE GRADE

Thirty per cent of York Region students don't meet standards

BY STEFANIA RIZZI
 Staff Writer

Almost 30 per cent of York Region elementary schools' Grade 3 or 6 students are not meeting provincial standards in reading, writing and math, according to a study released by a parent lobby group.

On Monday, SchoolWorks!, an Edmonton-based organization, released a ranking of 150 schools in Ontario whose Grade 3 or 6 students are performing below provincial standards in reading, writing and math.

Nearly 58 of the more than 1,000 public, separate, private and French schools surveyed were from York Region.

The schools were ranked based on results from standardized tests conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office two years ago and administered to gauge student achievement in reading, writing and math.

By ranking the schools, Denis Lapiere, project director of SchoolWorks!, said he is hoping parents and school communities will lobby the government to improve the education system.

"We want parents and school councils to begin to mobilize to demand immediate changes in education," Lapiere said, explaining parents asked his organization to rank low-performing Ontario schools. "Typically what happens, parents and schools aren't aware of discrepancies between schools (in their own board) and this highlights

See SCHOOL, page 21.

See RESIDENTS, page 19.

JAKES
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