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8 Markham Home Show purchased by York Region Newspaper Group shows division.

ARTS & CULTURE CALENDAR

EVENT: 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' pantomime
WHEN: March 1 & 2 (Tickets from Christ Church)
WHERE: Latcham Hall, Stouffville (905-640-1461)



18 Better read than dead: Poetry in York Region is at 'an all-time low.'

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Stouffville Tribune

50 CENTS INCLUDING GST / 44 PAGES

SATURDAY, FEB. 16, 2002

TO REACH US: (905) 294-2200

Community Character drive takes off in region

'We're all accountable,' York chairperson says

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

York Region is now officially a Community of Character.

Politicians, community and business leaders as well as students gathered Tuesday for the launch of an initiative that aims to make the region a caring and safe community.

"In a character community, everyone works together," regional chairperson Bill Fisch said during the launch, held at York Region headquarters in Newmarket.

"We promote caring neighbourhoods, we show respect. We're accountable for all our actions.

"Everyone must play a part."

Indeed, convincing residents of the value of the Character Community — and getting them to buy into it — has been a primary goal for Markham Mayor Don Cousens, who has spearheaded the initiative.

He said the effort will be successful if a community standard is created that promotes positive attributes such as honesty, integrity and respect, while eschewing less desirable behaviour and traits.

"In a community of character, undisciplined living is socially unacceptable," said Mr. Cousens. While much preparation has

MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR PLAN WILL HAVE PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNER THIS SPRING

Transit system fast-tracked

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

York Region's plan for a multi-billion-dollar transit system has been put on the fast track, to take advantage of new provincial funding.

The region will choose a private sector partner to design, construct and operate the system in the Hwy. 7 corridor by this spring.

"It's a tight timetable," said York Region chairperson Bill Fisch, who heads a steering committee on the rapid transit partnership.

"When we decided to embark on this four or five months ago, we realized things (at the provincial level) would happen very quickly, so we wanted to be ready."

Having a public/private partnership in place will position the

region to land a share of the \$1.25 billion pledged in late December by the province through its Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships (GTIP) fund, regional officials believe.

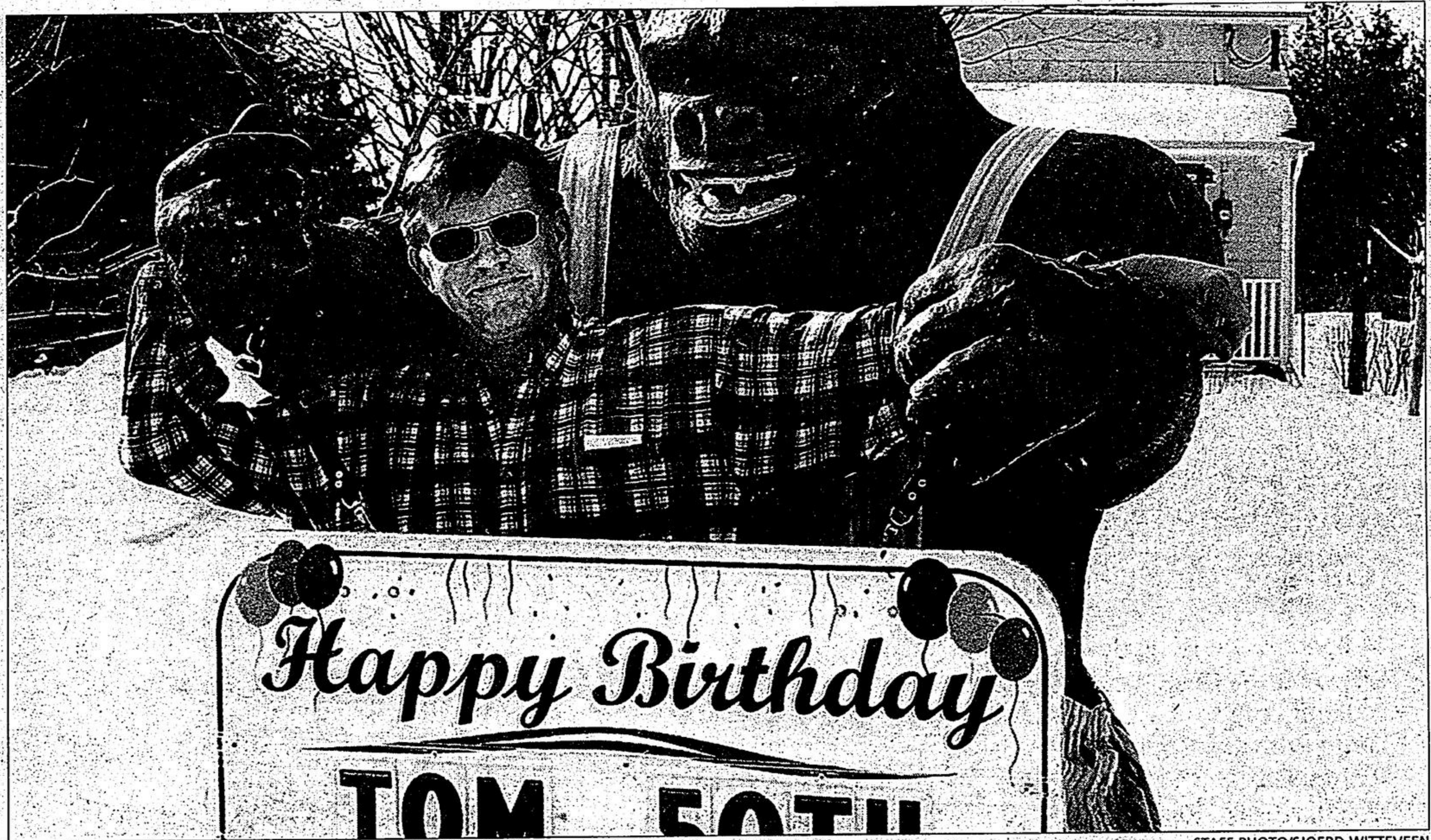
Some 75 municipal and private sector applicants are vying for the funds; a short list of proposals will be called for in the spring.

The region has also submitted

an application for GTIP funds to improve York Region Transit (YRT) service throughout the sprawling municipality.

The region's wish list, including rapid transit for the Hwy. 7 corridor and better bus service throughout the region, will cost billions of dollars over the next 30 years. Senior government funding

See TRANSIT, page 7.



STAFF PHOTOS/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

HAPPY 50TH, BIG GUY!

Tom Clarkson chooses his friends where he can find them, in this case a plastic gorilla to help celebrate his 50th birthday. Mr. Clarkson found the ape on the front yard of his Ninth Line home in Bloomington north of Stouffville last week.

See SCHOOLS, page 11.

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