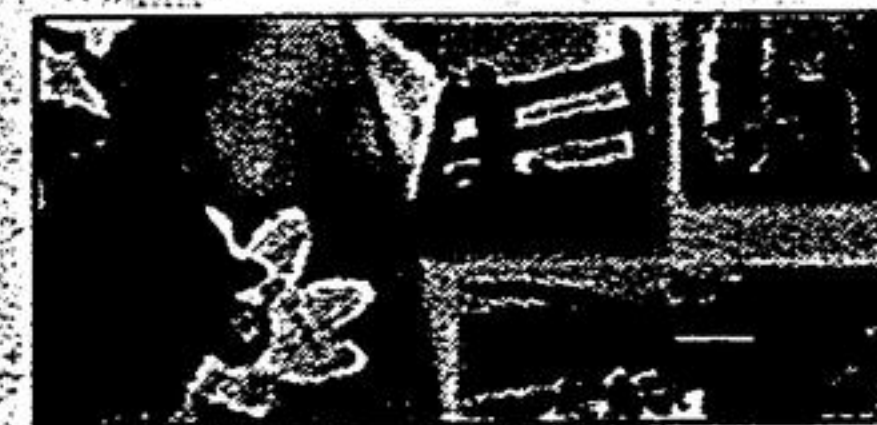


EVENT: Christ Church's 'Pied Piper' pantomime
WHEN: Friday and Saturday (see page 19)
WHERE: Latcham Hall, Stouffville



Don't miss the Whitchurch-Stouffville Spring and Summer activity guide inside today's paper.

INSIDE: Letters 6
Ransberry . . . 11
Calendar 26
Classified 29

5 Whitchurch-Stouffville resident tells council she wants town to be pesticide-free next year.

SERVING WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE SINCE 1888

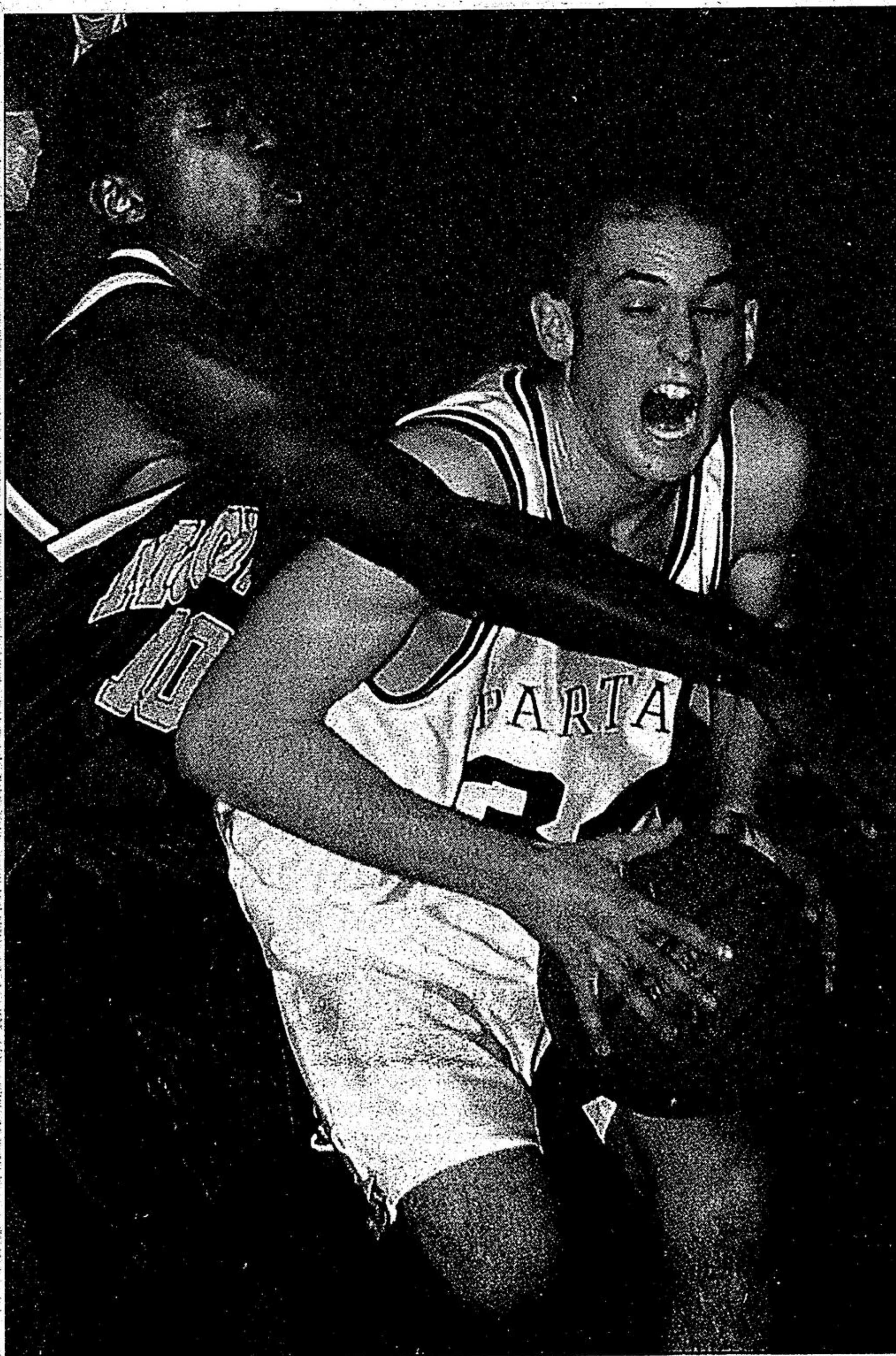
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THURSDAY, FEB. 28, 2002

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Driving to a championship



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Stouffville District Secondary School Spartan Shane Timms (right) is blocked by Nigel Paul of Markham's Father Markham Michael McGivney Catholic Academy as he attempts to go up for a layup in Tuesday's York Region Athletic Association senior boys' tier two basketball final at Stouffville. The Spartans won the title with a 51-40 win. See story on page 27.

POT SMOKERS ISSUED ALERT

Students violently ill after using marijuana

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

At least four York Region high school students have become violently ill after smoking what police believe is tainted marijuana — and investigators are warning pot smokers, especially young ones, to beware.

Since Jan. 7, four students between the ages of 15 and 17 have suffered serious adverse reactions, including vomiting, loss of control of their limbs, loss of balance and, in two cases, the loss of consciousness, all after smoking a joint. Increased heart rate and a sharp drop in blood pressure have also been noted.

All were taken by ambulance to hospital for treatment.

"The important thing to remember is the producer and the distributor have no concern about the health and welfare of the end user," said York Regional Police Const. Stuart Betts. "It's a life decision here. The risks are more now and the danger is more extreme, especially if no one is there to look after someone if they lose consciousness."

The first incident occurred Jan. 7 when a 15-year-old student at Newmarket's Sir William Mulock High School smoked a joint at lunch and became ill. He began vomiting, could not maintain his balance and his blood pressure dropped. An ambu-

See VICTIMS, page 15.

Town taxes going up 2.9%

Poor can't afford rates, Councillor Pliakes tells town

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

Homeowners in Whitchurch-Stouffville will dig a little deeper into their pockets to find an extra \$28 in town taxes when the tax collector comes calling.

On Tuesday, following a six-hour meeting, Whitchurch-Stouffville council passed a \$14.2-million budget, reflecting a 2.9 per cent tax hike.

The average house in Whitchurch-Stouffville, valued at \$250,000, will now carry a tax bill of \$3,091 — \$768 for the municipality, \$1,390 for York Region and \$932 for the York Region school boards.

Including the three levels of taxation, the tax bill will show an increase of \$60 for the average home valued at \$250,000.

The vote to pass the budget was not unanimous: Ward 1 Councillor Steve Pliakes and Ward 5 representative Harry Bowes were the dissenters.

Councillor Pliakes said he just couldn't support a budget that called for a tax increase. "We have \$14 million sitting in reserve; we have development charges pouring in like a tap and we have 1,500 new houses coming on board. Why are we increasing taxes?"

Mayor Wayne Emmerson said he has no trouble defending the budget even though it marks the second year in a row taxes increased in Whitchurch-Stouffville. The 2001 operating budget, valued at about \$13 million, also carried a 2.9 per cent tax hike.

See TAX, page 20.

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