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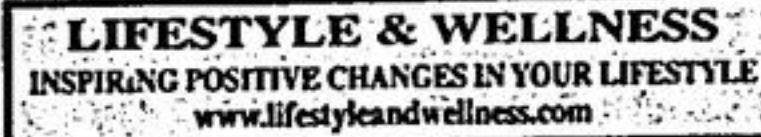
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Tax hike too much for Bowes, Pliaques

From page 1.

"It was a tough budget. It was difficult to hold the line," he said. "But it was the best we could do. I would have liked to have turned out a zero-increase budget. But we couldn't manage it."

A \$2.50-an hour hike in rink user fees for children in hockey and figure skating, coupled with the overall state of the streets in Stouffville concerned Councillor Bowes enough that he wouldn't give the budget his blessing.

"All the hockey players and figure skaters needed was \$5,000 to prevent a user fee increase," Mr. Bowes noted. "I couldn't agree to pass a budget that made these people pay more."

As for the condition of downtown and area streets, he said some streets, "especially Baker Street and Charles Street, are a complete disgrace."

It was a give-and-take budget-setting ordeal. Lost are street vacuuming and leaf blowing from town ditches. By eliminating both, the town saves about \$10,000.

On the other side of the coin, about \$75,000 in interest earned from last year's sale of Whitchurch-Stouffville Hydro to Hydro One was earmarked to help improve street lighting, explained M.J. Pourvahidi of the treasury department.

The municipality's revenues for 2002 total \$14.5 million. Of that, \$10 million is from general revenues, while \$4.5 million sits in the hydro reserve fund.

"Our reserves are very good," said Mayor Emmerson. "And future development will help us even more. When the Big Pipe (the York-Durham sewage system, expected to arrive in Whitchurch-Stouffville next year), is here,

it'll mean even more good things."

Prior to 2001, Whitchurch-Stouffville taxes were frozen for five years. "In the past eight years, we've seen taxes increase by a total of six per cent," Mayor Emmerson said.

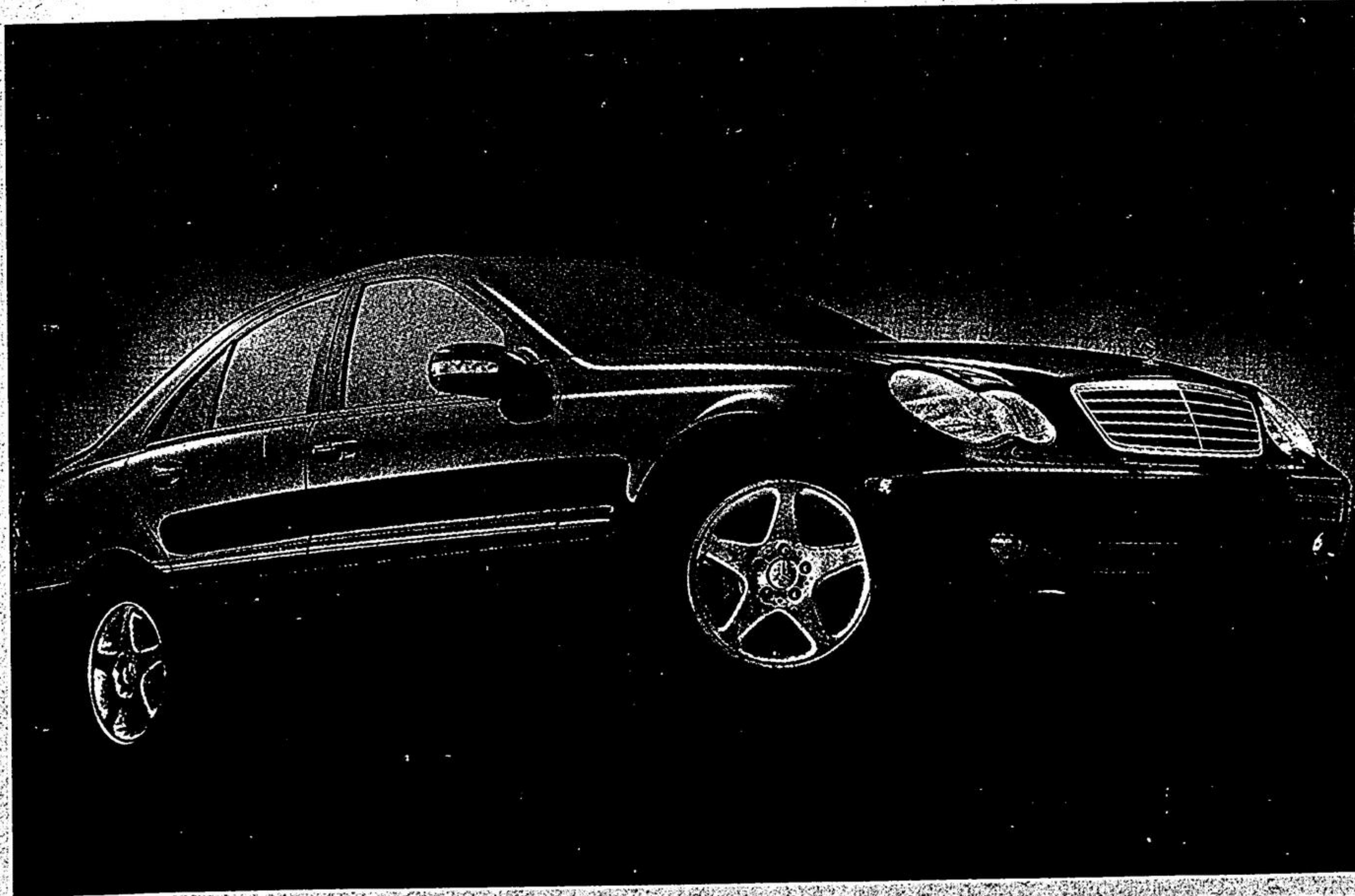
Recently, York Region set its budget, showing a 2.4-per cent tax increase. For the average homeowner in Whitchurch-Stouffville, this adds an extra \$31 to the regional part of the bill. There will be no increase in taxes for education.

"Why are we taking money from poor people? The rich will pay anything..."

On Tuesday, \$37,850 was earmarked to keep the new indoor swimming pool complex operating in 2002, while \$504,950 was designated for the new Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library. Both facilities are part of an all-purpose complex that opened last fall in Stouffville Memorial Park.

Other money allocated for 2002 includes \$1.7 million for public works, \$1.3 million for fire services, \$1.9 million for water and sewer cost, \$1.9 million for water and sewer, \$83,000 for animal control and \$69,000 to the town-owned cemetery.

Councillor Pliaques questioned the tax hike saying, "If we were in dire straits, I could understand this budget's tax increase. But, we're not. Why are we taking money from poor people? The rich will pay anything we ask of them. They don't care. But it's different for the poor people. We ask them for \$20 more one year, \$20 more the next. It has to stop."



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