

New jobs found in IT sector

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computer systems design and related services leading the way.

Retail, food and entertainment sectors also showed rapid growth in the period covered by the study.

York Region's immensely diverse economic base is often cited as the reason the area is all but recession-proof.

But that doesn't mean the uncertainty that accompanied last September's attacks on America did not cause some fallout in York. Ruth Burkholder, president of the Markham Board of Trade, said the effects were felt most sharply by smaller organizations.

"Smaller businesses are having a difficult time selling their products and ... services," Ms Burkholder said. "We (the board) lost a number of members after Sept. 11 as well."

Business operators cut what costs they could to endure the dip in revenues, a trend evident throughout the GTA, Ms Burkholder said.

"They looked at it and felt they should not spend the money at that time," she said.

She is hopeful that as times improve, businesses will renew their participation in boards of trade and chambers of commerce: "The worst thing you can do is cut your marketing."

But the economy in Markham continues to reflect the region-wide trend, Ms Burkholder said. New companies are setting up shop and major players, particularly in the information technology sector, continue to flourish.

"I know there is an increase in jobs and it seems to be in the IT sector in particular," Ms Burkholder said.

She was quick to point out, however, that increasing employment opportunities bring pressure to bear on the region. A lack of affordable housing for new employees means more commuters are flowing onto the region's already-crowded roads, she said.

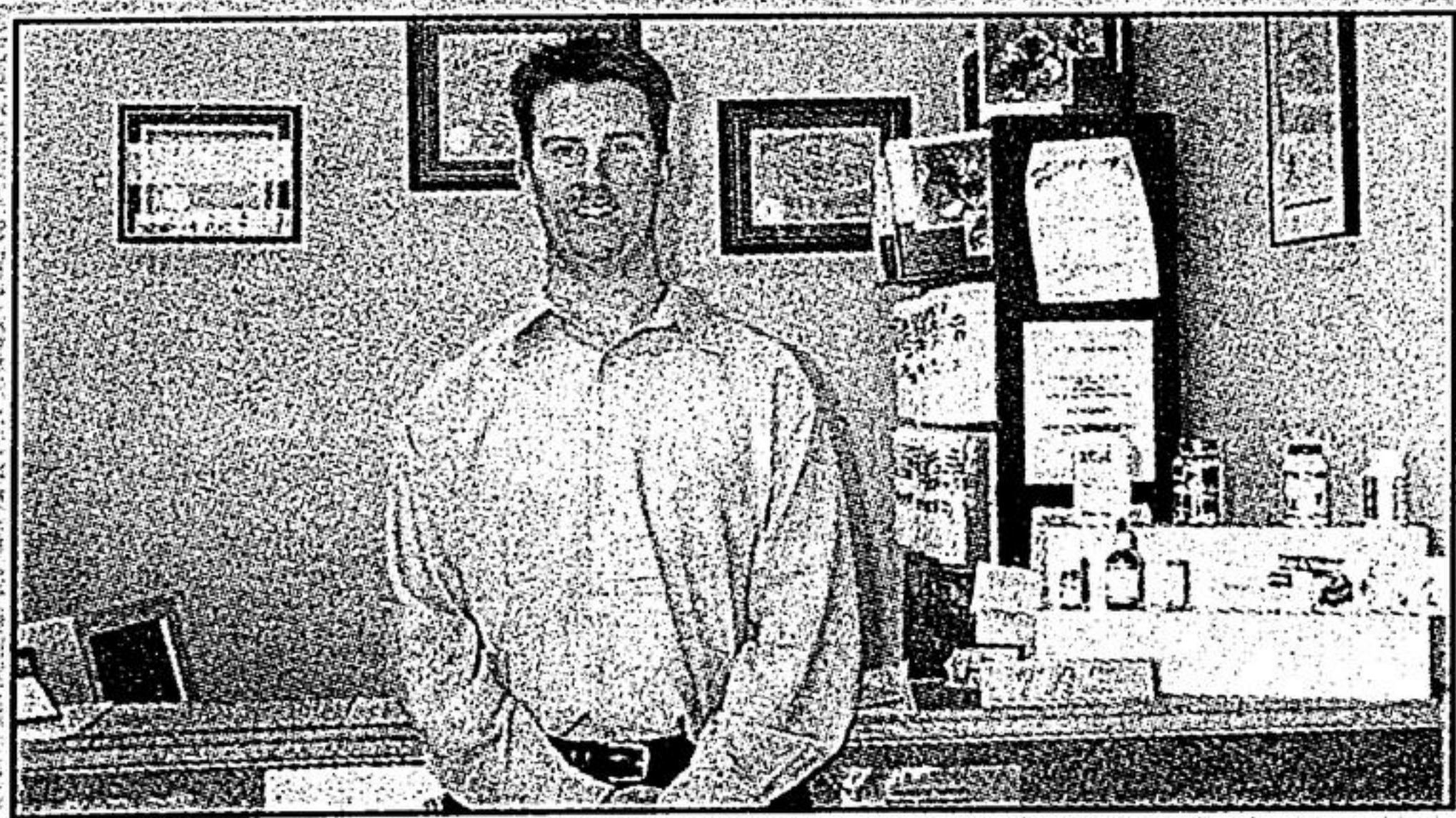
That means politicians must plan to provide infrastructure, while conserving the green space and other attractions that continue to draw people to York Region, Ms Burkholder said.

The region was home to about 792,000 residents as of December 31, 2001. That's an increase of 38,000 residents from the end of 2000.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch said regional planners and politicians are keenly aware of the need for growth strategies and the provision of services.

"The region is supporting this growth with investment in transit and roads and improvements to water and waste water services," he said.

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Dr. Peter J. Moore B.Sc., D.C.

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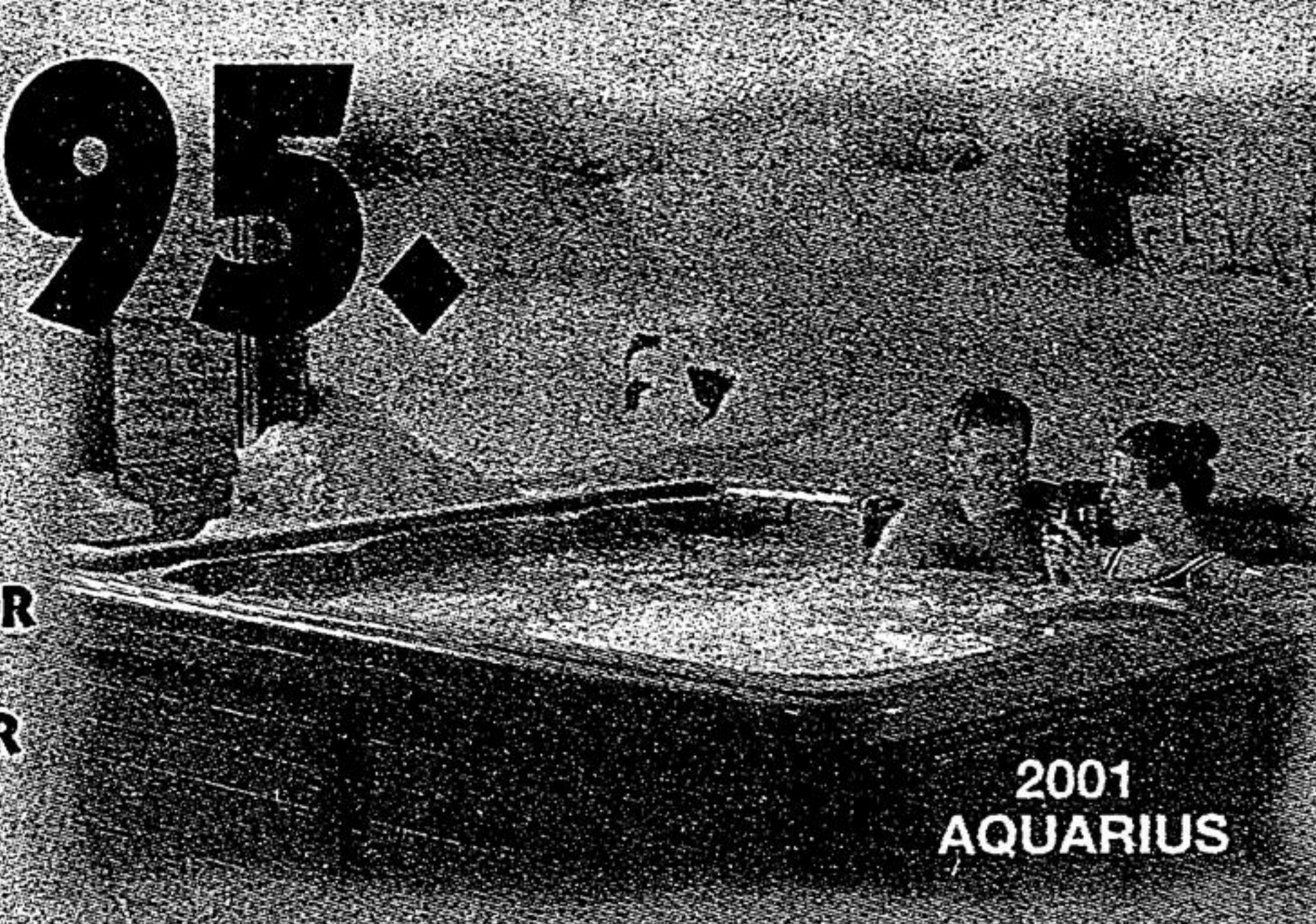
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