



16 Diversions: sample our York Region Super Bowl of potato chip tasting

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Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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OSPCA closing animal hospital

600 clients must find new pet doctors

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

Alex Tandory can't say enough about the veterinarians and staff at the Ontario SPCA animal hospital who saved the life of his ailing kitty cat.

But he's terribly dismayed the hospital, on Woodbine Avenue in Whitchurch-Stouffville, will close to the public at the end of February.

"I had a very sick cat and they really helped me," said the Newmarket man who has been disabled for the past 10 years. "Some other vets turned me away because I'm on welfare and these people are really out there trying hard. It's such a good place and they charge maybe one third of what other vets would charge."

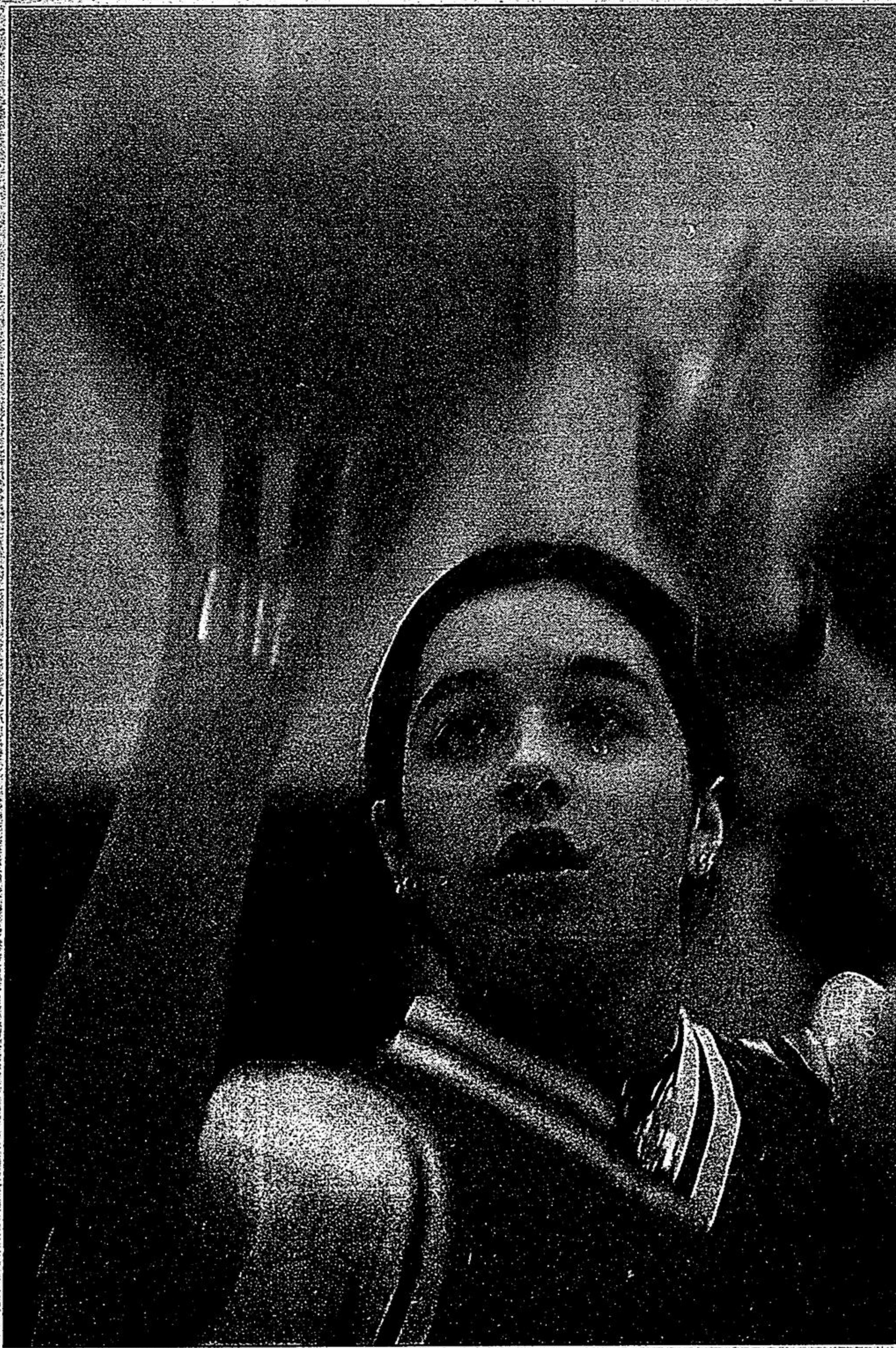
"They told me they don't have enough money to operate the animal hospital anymore, we're going to lose a good thing."

Brian Pemberton, director of communications for the OSPCA, confirmed the veterinary clinic will closed to the general public on Feb. 27 but said it isn't simply a matter of lack of funds.

"It hasn't proved possible to provide services to the provincial animal centre and to the public with the existing resources — both human and financial resources — available," said Mr.

See OSPCA, page 9.

Big shot



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Alessandra Addorisio, 13, a Grade 8 student at St Brigid Catholic School in Stouffville, aims for the basket during the ninth annual Whitchurch-Stouffville Knights of Columbus free throw competition at St. Mark Catholic School Wednesday. Alessandra won her division and advances to the area finals in Markham. See story on page 15.

8% TAX HIKE LOOMS

\$116 hike on \$330,000 home unless region makes cuts

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

York Region politicians got a look at the first draft of the 2004 budget this week and it was a sobering experience.

Unless council can find ways to make cuts in the next few months, the \$1.6-billion proposal presented Thursday to regional council by chief administrative officer Michael Garrett represents an 8-per-cent tax hike, meaning an extra \$116 on a home assessed at \$330,000.

And, of course, the regional budget is an add-on to the budgets of the nine area municipalities.

It includes capital spending of \$870 million, part of a \$5.5-billion 10-year capital plan. It also calls for increases of about two cents per cubic metre to regional water and wastewater rates.

And it could have been worse, Mr. Garrett said, explaining the preliminary numbers in front of staff last fall represented a tax hike of 14 to 15 per cent.

"We set a goal right then to ensure any increase would be kept to 2 to 3 per cent," Mr. Garrett told council.

The report also touched on another \$9.5 million in services such as additional transit routes and roads that did not make the first draft and likely will not be included in 2004.

Councillors agreed they would not increase the bottom line in upcoming deliberations in committee.

The net regional tax levy is \$521.7 million.

See TRANSIT, page 4.

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