



21 DIVERSIONS: drawing the line on racy lyrics at school radio station

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Crime stats, headlines sell police budget

\$137M document includes 110 new cops

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

Instead of opening his budget presentation with financial summaries and staffing levels, York Region Police Chief Armand La Barge began with crime stats and newspaper headlines about murder, mayhem and organized crime.

Calling it "the new normal" for the reality of policing in 2004, the chief opened Thursday's presentation to the region's finance committee — the third such session since early February — with a slide presentation showing 63 robberies in the first two months of this year, compared to 46 from January to March in 2003.

It also listed three more home invasions, four more car jackings and three more traffic fatalities. There were also six homicides and charges laid against 34 massage parlours in the first two months of 2004, compared to none in the same period last year.

The only place where the numbers are lower is in marijuana grow houses (18 charges, compared to 26 last year) and that's only because our officers are so busy with (processing) last year's (charges), the chief said.

The slide also showed headlines — "3 Victims killed at spa, police say," "Rub parlours thrive in York," "Organized crime stakes claim" and "Two injured in

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Welcome to splitsville



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Councillor Susanne Hinton reacts after leaving a split during the Big Brothers Big Sisters of York Bowl for Kids at Stouffville Bowl last Saturday. With corporate donations, the event raised about \$5,000. Other bowling events take place this weekend and next across the region.

COUNCIL SENDS BUDGET BACK

Mayor, councillors differ over 12% tax hike proposal

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

In a surprise move, Whitchurch-Stouffville councillors voted Thursday to postpone a budget meeting and told town staff to bring back another budget with a smaller tax increase.

The move was made without the support of Mayor Sue Sherban.

The proposed 2004 municipal tax increase of 12 per cent didn't sit well with the councillors who were looking for only a 5-per-cent increase. Councillor Susanne Hilton made the motion to suspend the operating budget meeting and have staff come back with tax increase options of 5 to 7 per cent.

"To get to 5 per cent, there have to be service cuts," Nick Kristoffy, the town's administrator/treasurer said. Leisure services, public works, fire and emergency services and the library are the largest budget items, he added.

It was the first time in many years council had postponed a budget meeting.

"At a 12-per-cent increase, the owner of an average home, valued at \$330,000, would have had to pay another \$100 on the municipal portion of their tax bill," Mr. Kristoffy said. Dropping the rate to 5 per cent would lower that figure to \$42.

The municipality receives about 24 cents out of each tax dollar paid by residents. Last year on a \$330,000 home, municipal taxes were around \$840, while the region took \$1,576 and regional school boards \$1,005, for

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