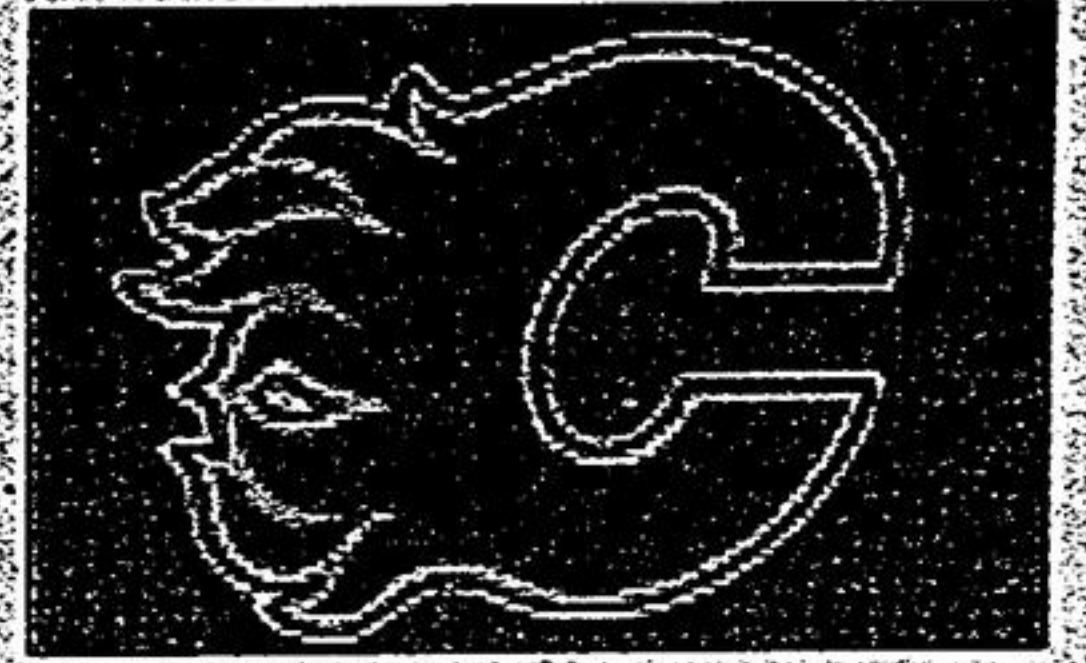


Stouffville Sun-Tribune

THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 2004 ■ SERVING THE COMMUNITY OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE ■ 32 PAGES/\$1 INCLUDING GST



6 Stouffville native enjoying ride with Flames to Stanley Cup final

Opinion 6
 Calendar 22
 Sports 26
 Classified 28



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Pedals to the metal

Betty-Ann Brown (front, centre) and Robin Stewart (right) and other volunteers from Bloomington Cove long term care facility ride the Big Bike for Heart and Stroke along Main Street in Stouffville Saturday. Riders collected pledges for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Bear spotted near downtown Stouffville

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

A large footprint, complete with claw marks, found about 8:30 a.m. yesterday in an Elm Road backyard had the property owner stumped for a while.

Debbie Lawrence knew the print was too big for a dog. Also, it didn't have the markings of a farm animal.

"I couldn't, for the life of me, figure out what it was," she said. "It was a puzzle."

What Mrs. Lawrence didn't know was a few hours earlier truck driver Art Van Esterik called his wife to report a bear sighting at the corner of the Ninth Line and Main Street, near downtown Stouffville.

"My husband was on his way for work at about 2:30 a.m. when he spotted the black bear," Terrie Van Esterik said. "Art called home to tell me not to let the cat out in the morning."

Whitchurch-Stouffville bylaw officer Keith Saunders said it's the first time in his 17-year career here that a bear made its way to the downtown area.

Warren May, a district biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources, is not as surprised to hear a bear was in town. The recent sighting isn't new to the area, he said.

"Two years ago, there was a report of a bear southwest of Stouffville."

"Within that area, there's the Oak Ridges

Moraine and Duffins Creek and one branch of the Rouge River," Mr. May said. "These streams have cedar trees. There's also good fishing opportunities and wildlife use the corridors. So, it's not inconceivable that a bear would be in the area."

"This particular bear is likely passing through," he said.

However, he does warn residents to take some measures to discourage the bear from hanging around.

"Remove any potential attractants," Mr. May said. "Clean off the barbecue grill, clean out the bird feeder and don't put garbage out until it's pick-up time."

— with files from Mike Hayakawa

CAN ANYONE FIX SYSTEM, RESIDENTS WONDER Health care biggest issue with voters

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

A backlogged health care system forced Norma Van Der Geest to wait two years for an eye operation and another two years for a knee replacement.

The Newmarket senior citizen is upset the provincial Liberals re-introduced a health premium.

But while health care is a priority for them in this election, Mrs. Van Der Geest and her husband, Bas, believe Canada's medicare system is essentially sound.

"We've been very lucky. We've had a family doctor all the time and we do get good care," Mrs. Van Der Geest said.

"The waiting times do bother me. But our family doctor is fantastic and he takes care of us."

That's why the Van Der Geests are leaning Liberal in the June 28 election, although they'd like to see home care and services for seniors improved.

"We will row with the oars we have," said Mr. Van Der Geest, adding he favours Prime Minister Paul Martin's business approach to government.

"I cannot foresee any of them (the parties) improving health care. I don't think they can do anything much about it realistically because the cost of it is absolutely over the top."

Mrs. Van Der Geest opposes any further privatization of health care.

"I think it should all be public. We pay enough taxes."

Canadians consistently rank health care as their No. 1 concern, and the three major political parties are all

See **WAITING**, page 19.

24hr Drive thru

 McDonald's

YOUR HOMETOWN FORD STORE

HOUSTON

HOUSTON FORD LTD.
 5786 Main St., Stouffville,
 905-640-4541
 www.billhoustonford.com

THE NEW '05 ESCAPE IS HERE!
 CANADA'S TOP SELLING COMPACT SUV
 OVER 20 AVAILABLE, ALL MODELS AND COLOURS TO CHOOSE FROM.

2 Carat Diamonds
 Save the one carat for her ears

 Barthau Jewellers
 6312 Main St., Stouffville
 (905) 640-4646
 www.bethgoldanddiamonds.com