

Sewer projects approved

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Ontario Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky approved sewer projects across York Region Friday, including a controversial project through Markham.

The ministry had delayed the second phase of the 16th Avenue trunk since July 2003 because it feared the Rouge River

would be damaged by the massive withdrawal and release of groundwater that would be carried out during sewer construction. The delay, which surprised the region, slowed construction across the south end of the region and as far north as East Gwillimbury.

Yesterday, after a review of the region's elaborate plans to divert, heat and clean extracted groundwater from the project

before releasing it in streams, Ms Dombrowsky issued her approval, subject to 44 conditions.

The minister, however, ordered more stringent environmental assessments for two other proposed trunk sewers, the upper Leslie Street trunk through the Oak Ridges Moraine and the southeast collector through the Rouge Park in Markham.

The 16th Avenue project still cannot proceed without a ministry permit to take water, which was under review Friday.

York Regional chairperson Bill Fisch said the 16th Avenue project would cost \$25 million more than budgeted and new conditions the ministry was placing on all the region's sewer projects would raise the cost by up to 25 per cent.

"These costs will be borne by the development community and, ultimately, the householders that will buy these properties," he said.

The minister also approved the 19th Avenue interceptor in Richmond Hill, the lower Leslie Street trunk in Richmond Hill and trunk sewers along Bathurst Street and Langstaff Road in Vaughan.

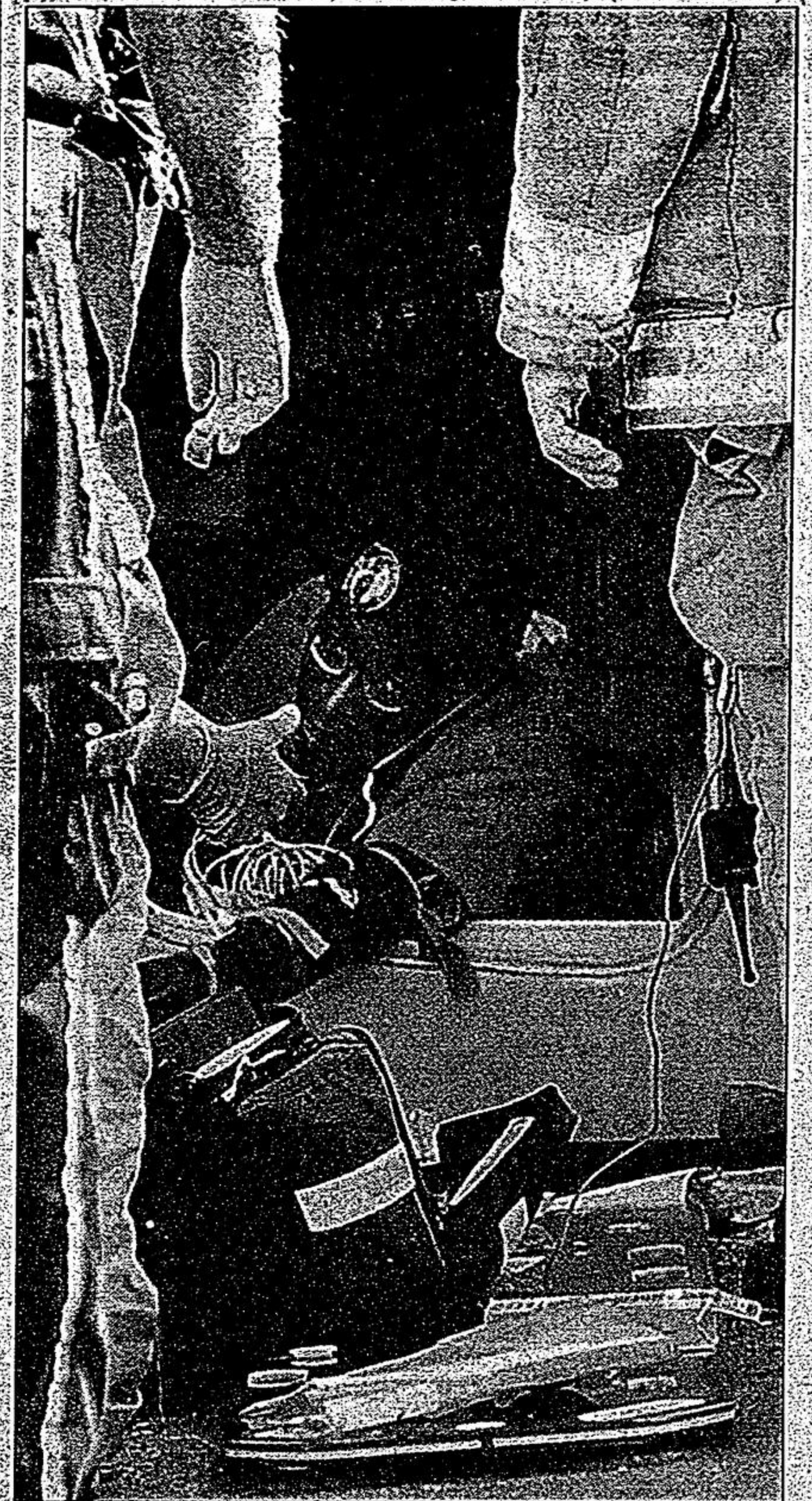
"We're encouraged that they've let the three main sewers go through," said Mark Parsons, president of the Greater Toronto Home Builders Association, adding "thousands of homeowners get a chance to get into their units."

Closing dates for some new homes in York Region had already been affected by the delay in the sewer project, which is needed to double sewage capacity and allow construction of several subdivisions that already had local approval.

Jim Robb, general manager of Friends of the Rouge Watershed, which two years ago requested in-depth assessments for all regional sewer projects, called the minister's decision disastrous.

"It's the Pontius Pilate routine," Mr. Robb said Friday. "She's washing her hands, in a way, of the issue," which is the massive extraction of groundwater and the effect all the sewer projects together will have on rivers and the moraine.

TRAPPED BY TRUCK



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Emergency services personnel try to remove a man from an overturned garbage truck on Roxbury Crescent, in the Ninth Line and 14th Avenue area of Markham, Friday afternoon. The truck tipped while making a turn, pinning the driver's legs, police said. He was taken to Sunnybrook hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

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