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Smoking rooms not up to snuff across region

BY ROY GREEN
 Staff Writer

More than 75 per cent of the costly designated smoking areas in restaurants, bars, taverns and bingo halls in York Region failed to meet minimum standards, according to a report from the region's health services department.

The report comes as Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman announced he will introduce legislation this month that will effectively ban smoking anywhere other than in private homes.

There are 102 premises with the completely enclosed and separately ventilated smoking rooms, some of which cost as much as \$350,000 to build, but the report says most of them fail to meet bylaw requirements due to poor maintenance, insufficient air supply and exhaust overcrowding or failing to keep the door closed, according to tobacco control officer Dave Harrison.

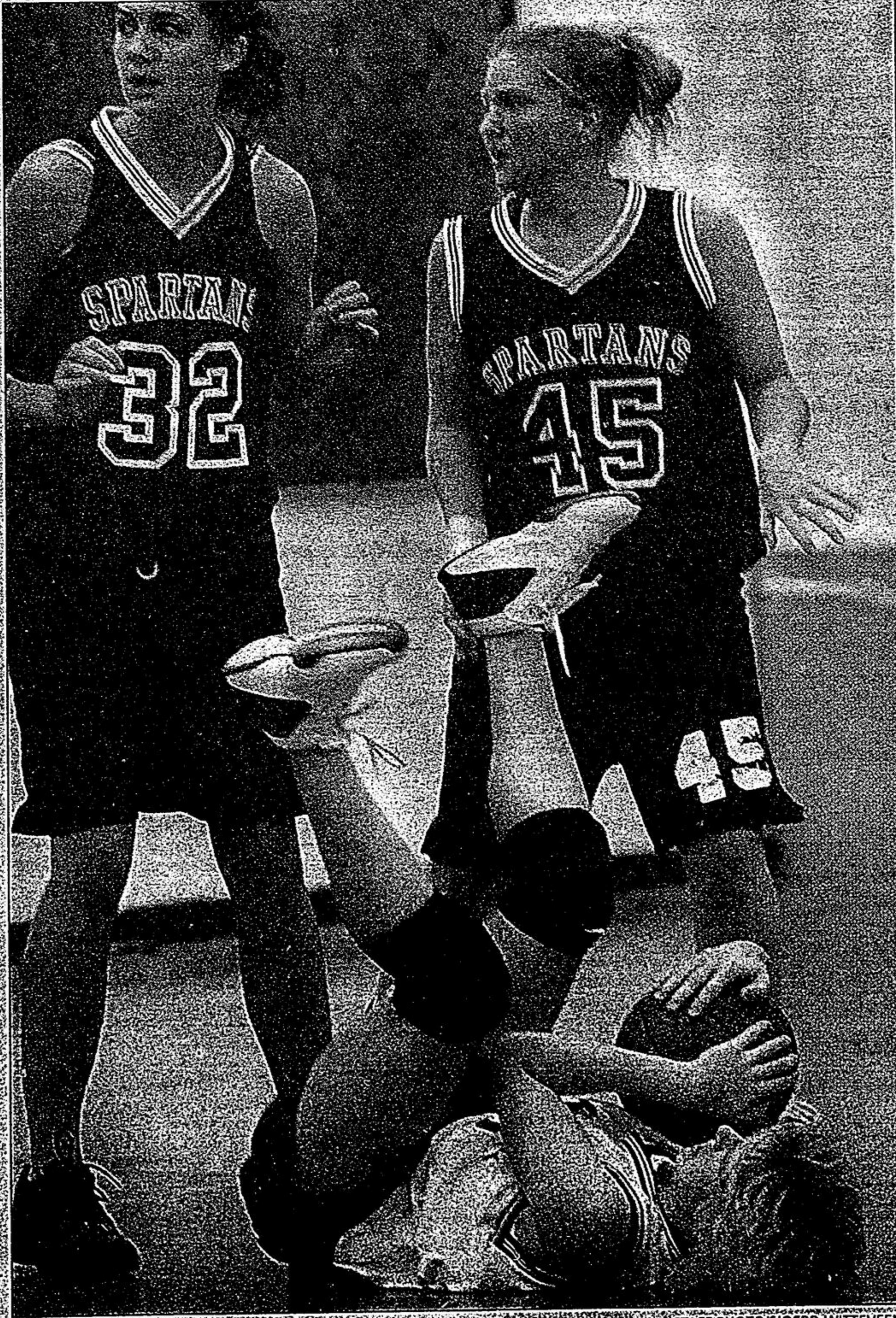
WORK AT FIRST

"They work when they're first built, but we go back a year later and we find doors are left open, the filters haven't been cleaned or they're not getting the amount of air they're supposed to get," Mr. Harrison said. "The bottom line is they're not meeting the criteria."

Owners are issued a \$255 ticket for the first violation, but that could accelerate to a court summons and fine as high as \$5,000 for repeated offenses.

The high number of failures in the smoking areas is not surprising, according to Markham Regional Councillor Jack Heath, a member of

See **THREE-QUARTERS**, page 8.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

'It wasn't me, ref'

Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans Erin Button (left) and Laura Moller claim innocence as Markham District High School Marauder Tara MacLeod goes down with the ball in a York Region senior girls' high school basketball game at Markham Tuesday. Markham won 38-30.

'RETIREMENT MONEY PULLED OUT FROM UNDER' Greenbelt plan leaves farmers out in cold

BY MIKE ADLER
 Staff Writer

Buying farmland you expect to see developed is no different than buying a lottery ticket you hope wins a million dollars — there's no guarantee, Bob Bedggood says.

"We're not going to pay for hope," added Mr. Bedggood, appointed with former federal agriculture minister Lyle Vanclief by the province this year to find out how agriculture can survive Ontario's urban growth.

Their findings, distributed last week, were meant to help farmers who find their lands in the province's proposed Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt and its long-term plan for growth in southern Ontario.

After listening to rural residents in York and other areas this summer, Mr. Bedggood and Mr. Vanclief advised against compensating farmers who won't be able to sell to developers because of the greenbelt or other anti-sprawl initiatives.

Mr. Bedggood, a former president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, knows some farmers will disagree, perhaps starting Monday, when the province hosts a public meeting on the greenbelt at Markham Secondary School in Markham.

The greenbelt would cover the Holland Marsh and Duffin Rouge Agricultural Preserve in both Markham and Pickering. Planned developments in Queensville aside, it would halt losses of farmland everywhere in York north of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Terry O'Connor, president of the York Federation of Agriculture, said he needs time to digest the plan but

See **FARMERS**, page 16.

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