

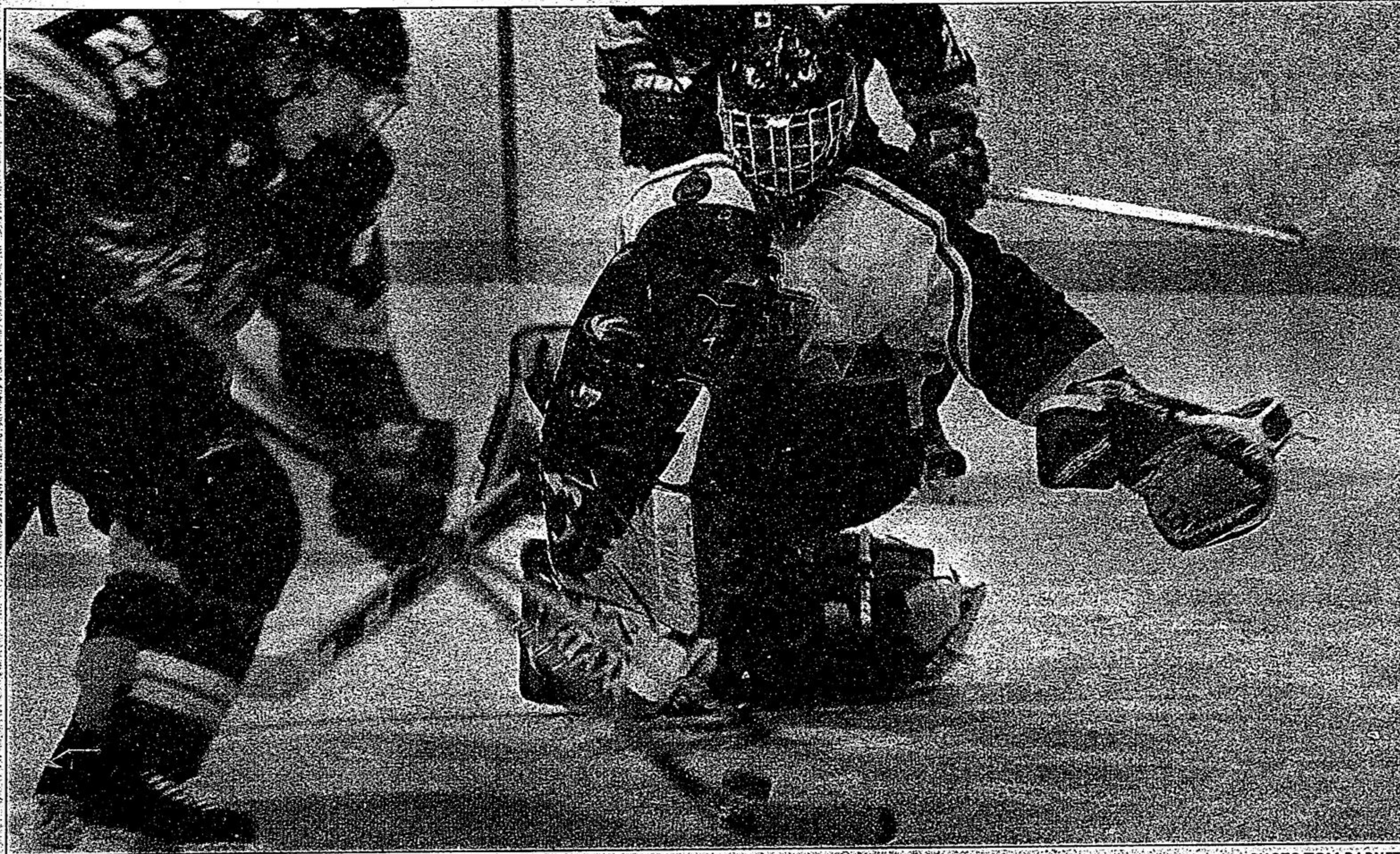
# Stouffville Sun-Tribune

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2005 ■ SERVING THE COMMUNITY OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE ■ 32 PAGES/\$1 INCLUDING GST



**3** Plenty of fun on tap during Bruce's Mill maple sugar days

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PHOTO/TOM BARNETT

## Season ends for Spirit

Newmarket Hurricanes' Chris Gill tries to score on Stouffville Spirit goalie Dan McWhinney during Tuesday's sixth game of their Provincial Junior A Hockey League south conference semifinal series at Stouffville Arena. Newmarket eliminated the Spirit with a 4-2 victory. See page 25 for details.

## Paramedic shortage hits home in emergency

BY ROY GREEN  
 Staff Writer

When Doug Sheppard accompanied his ailing father on an ambulance ride to hospital this week, he got a first-hand look at the problems facing paramedics in York Region every day.

Mr. Sheppard is chairperson of CUPE Local 905, the union representing municipal employees, including the region's 300 emergency medical services paramedics.

"I'm not EMS, but now I understand what these guys are experiencing," Mr. Sheppard said of his six-hour wait in the emergency room before his father was admitted.

"Delays of anywhere from three hours to

eight hours are becoming more commonplace all the time. You've got two paramedics and an ambulance tied up for hours until the patient can be transferred over to the hospital's care."

Wait times endured by paramedics offloading patients have increased 57 per cent in the past four years and cost more than \$1 million in lost hours annually.

And they translate into critical shortages of personnel and ambulances available to handle a crisis, York Region EMS manager Brad Meekin said.

"At any given time of day, we can go down to less than one ambulance for each of the (nine) municipalities in the region," Mr.

Meekin said. "Our objective is always to have coverage in every municipality, but it isn't uncommon where we'll be down to three or four covering the whole region."

The problem, which affects the entire GTA, also contributes to slower response times, Mr. Meekin said.

"When we're down to five or six units, they're driving further distances, which increases response times."

The mandated provincial standard response time is 11 minutes, 39 seconds and the average time for York EMS crews is only seven seconds off the standard.

And although a task force is reviewing the

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### FIGHTS AT SDSS

## 'I'll call police, if necessary': principal

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
 Staff Writer

An upswing in fighting at Stouffville District Secondary School has principal Arlene Smith warning parents and students she won't hesitate to call police if necessary.

"There are students who seem to believe the only way to solve their differences is through physical fights," said Mrs. Smith, who is meeting with police and students to find solutions.

She also addressed the problem in the school's most recent newsletter.

"There are also students who seem to enjoy the sport of watching," she noted.

Violence will not be tolerated at SDSS, Mrs. Smith stressed, adding students involved in fights will be suspended and the school will support criminal prosecutions.

Students are being told those who instigate, encourage or promote fighting will face discipline under the provincial Safe Schools Act, regardless of whether they actually participated in the fight.

Members of student council have met with the principal and vice-principal to discuss the problem, president Tim Dunham said.

"They asked for our thoughts and opinions so we could help out," he said.

"I don't think there's an astronomical increase in the incidents, but people are getting caught more," Mr. Dunham said. "The students are

See YORK, page 5.

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