

# Catholic board pleased with grant to offset school user fees

BY MITCHELL BROWN  
Staff Writer

Sports and youth groups that use York Region's Catholic schools are getting a break on rent.

The York Catholic District School Board announced Wednesday it is receiving a \$475,000 provincial grant, a one-time sum that will go toward rebates for non-profit youth and seniors groups that have booked space in one of the board's 88 schools over the current school year.

For people such as Yuri Studin, president of the Spartacus Soccer Club in Thornhill, the announce-

ment is "a big relief."

"It will give us some financial breaks and breathing space because we are being pressed, costwise, from all sides," he said, adding his club has been renting the gym at St. Elizabeth Catholic High School for the past 10 years.

While it was too soon to know if the announcement would have any effect on the fees parents pay to register their children, Mr. Studin said it would certainly help his club keep costs under control for the foreseeable future.

The money is part of a \$20-million initiative unveiled by the province last summer to encourage school boards to open build-

ings to the community.

Among the fee reductions:

- The \$5 fee for two hours of school use charged to youth recreation programs run by municipalities has been eliminated;

- The \$7.50 fee for two hours of school use charged to all other community non-profit groups serving children has been reduced to \$3.50;

- The \$35/hour staffing fee charged on Saturdays and the \$45/hour staffing fee for Sundays have been reduced by \$10 an hour for all recreation groups serving children; and

- Non-profit seniors groups, which had been paying \$12.50 for

two hours of use, will now pay \$7.50 for the same amount of time.

As well, school facilities will be made available to community groups for more hours, including in the summer.

In announcing the fee changes, Thornhill MPP Mario Racco said he receives many calls from residents asking why they had to pay money to use publicly funded buildings.

"In fairness to the school boards, there's a simple answer: It costs money to clean schools," he said.

But he said he hoped the new fees will go some way in increasing access to schools and encouraging

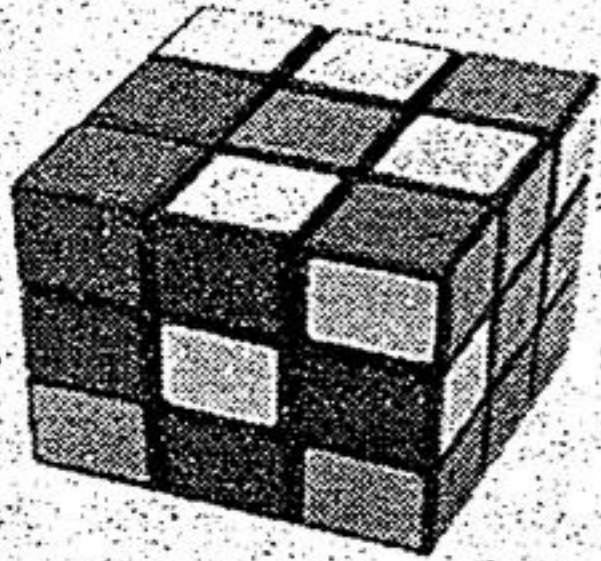
more young people to get involved in sports.

"Our schools should be community hubs where people can gather to learn, participate in community-based activities and stay active," he said.

A spokesperson for the York public board said it is in talks with the province and plans to make its own announcement in the near future.

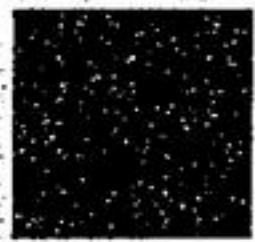
Community and sports groups that have rented space in York Catholic schools this year and seek a rebate are asked to call the board's community use of schools department.

Application deadline is Apr. 1.



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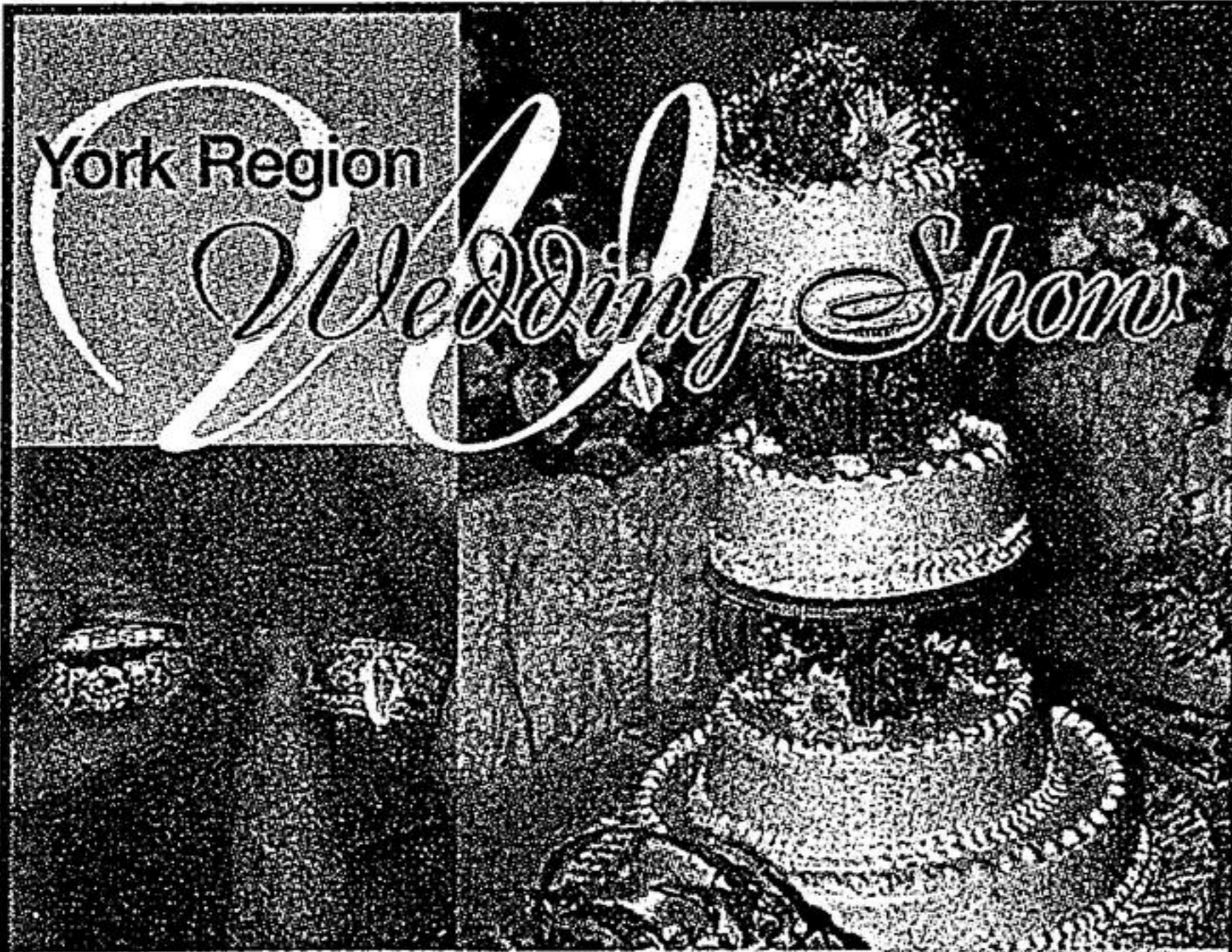
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