

Local agencies open to more oversight

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More would probably be launched if the ombud had the authority to investigate.

"What's the commonality between all the sectors we can't oversee? Two things: one is they eat up 80 percent of provincial tax money and they involve society's most vulnerable — the sick, the aged, the children in care," Mr. Marin said at Queen's Park. "I think these organizations are not overseen because these people don't have the kind of support and the kind of well-organized, well-oiled spokespersons and lobbyists to put their case forward and that's why I'm not pleased when I look at the Ombudsman Act and see we're left out of all of these really key areas."

Earlier this week, Mr. Marin complained about proposed provincial legislation that lets municipalities appoint their own ombuds, claiming there would be no guarantee those people would be impartial.

Vaughan Mayor Michael Di Biase has no problem with the idea of granting additional powers for the ombud to oversee municipalities, so long as it's clear what he can and can't review.

Both of the region's school boards had a similar reaction — they would like

more details.

"We're perfectly open and accountable — we don't imagine he would have very much business with our board," York Catholic District School Board chairperson Elizabeth Crowe said. "We'd really like to know the details and how this would play out in the long run."

Given the sensitive issues children's aid societies deal with, reviewers would need specialized expertise to review clinical judgments, Martin McNamara, executive director of the York Region Children's Aid Society, said in a statement.

Last year, Mr. Marin told a legislative committee his office would provide checks and balances to the children's aid system.

At the time, Mr. McNamara said children's agencies are highly regulated and subject to several procedures to ensure they are meeting standards. Parents or children with complaints can go to their caseworker, the worker's supervisor or department director, the agency's executive director and board of directors or to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

To find the report online, log onto ombudsman.on.ca and click on the 'what's new' link.

Cathedral centrepiece of development

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working relationship. They have brought it to an end," Mr. Fuller said.

The bishop has not returned repeated telephone messages.

"I can't speak for the eparchy," Mr. Fuller said. "It's safe to say that they believed the foundation should transfer the cathedral to the eparchy. The foundation didn't think it was appropriate or within its mandate to do that."

The cathedral on Woodbine Avenue north of Major Mackenzie Drive is the only North American church personally consecrated by Pope John Paul II. He blessed the cornerstone when construction began in 1984.

The church contends Mr. Roman wanted title to the cathedral and 50 acres transferred to the eparchy. The mining magnate died in 1988 before completing the legalities.

Today, the triple gold-domed church is the centrepiece of Cathedraltown, a 1,200-unit residential and commercial subdivision under construction. Among the developers is the foundation. A January 2006 community design plan shows a "precinct area" around the cathedral bordered by low and medium density housing.

Despite Vatican intervention and recent legal mediation, the foundation will not relinquish title to the cathedral, Slovak Republic honorary consul John Stephens said, suggesting the circumstances surrounding the church, land and its ownership will continue to be "a long festering problem".

Mr. Stephens, a former Thornhill resident and York school board chairperson, is also solicitor and executor for the late Bishop Michael Rusnak, Bishop Pazak's predecessor.

He contends the six-person foundation board voted Bishop Rusnak and his lawyer, George Cihra, off in 1998, around the time the Cathedraltown

development was taking shape.

Mr. Roman's widow, Betty, was installed as chairperson, he said.

Further, daughter Helen Roman-Barber, chairperson and CEO of Roman Corporation Limited, assumed control.

"Bishop Rusnak wanted a declaration that the cathedral belonged to the eparchy," Mr. Stephens said.

"The situation has been up in the air ever since."

Mr. Stephens said papal nuncios, diplomatic representatives of the Vatican based in Ottawa, attempted to discuss title transfer with no success.

"They just threw up their hands," he said.

"It's incomprehensible that control of the cathedral is under (the foundation) when it should be with the

eparchy. That's why the pope blessed the cornerstone in the first place."

The dispute is all about the 50-acre parcel of land, he said.

"While Bishop Pazak seems reluctant to comment, it is clear from plans filed at the Town of Markham that the foundation intends to sell off lands around the cathedral leaving a sidewalk around it and precious little parking," wrote Mr. Stephens in a letter to this newspaper.

Mr. Fuller said he could not comment on the allegations or identify the current foundation board members, citing confidentiality.

"I think what Mr. Stephens is talking about is confidential mediation between two parties," Mr. Fuller said. "Neither he or anyone should be talking about it."

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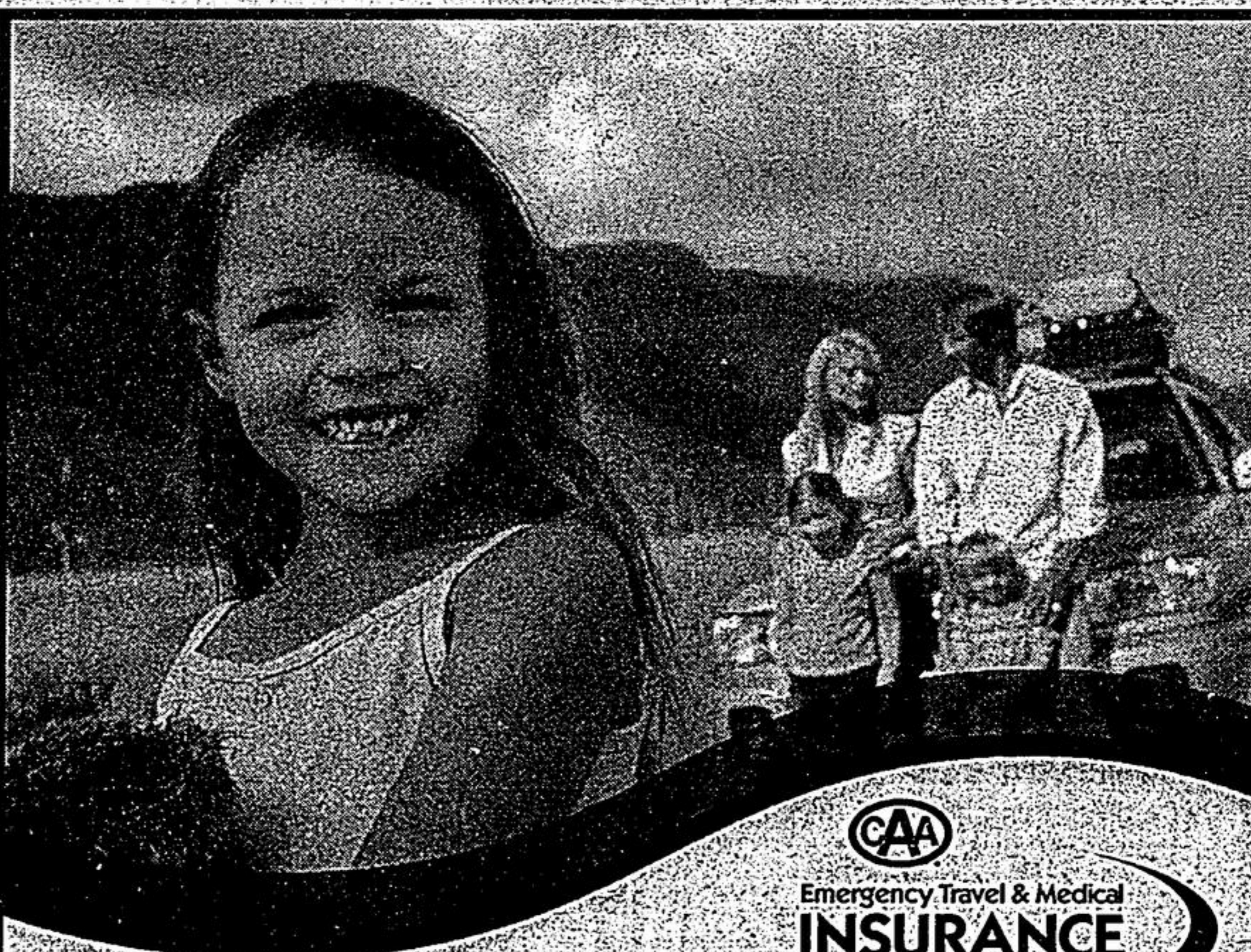
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