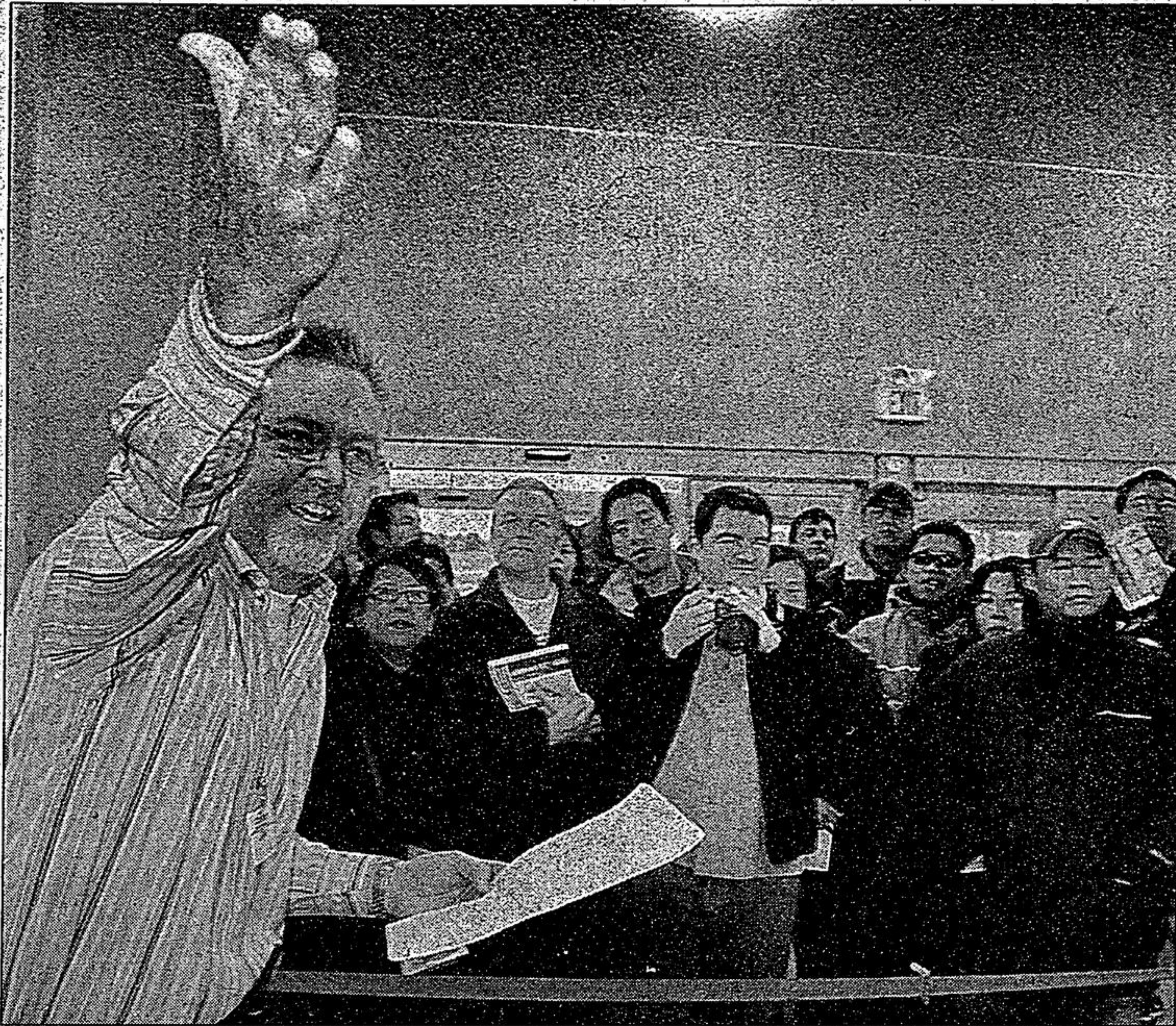


COSTCO CRAZE



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Cam Kjeldgaard, the manager of Costco's second store in Markham, gets ready to let in the first shoppers at the Kirkham Drive location on the east side of town at about 8 a.m. yesterday morning. Markham is the fourth Ontario community to have two Costco stores.

Taxpayers can't foot growth plan, Fisch says

York needs \$6.4 billion for 500,000 more people

BY DAVID FLEISCHER
Staff Writer

York Region is bracing for the next 25 years of intensive growth, but it is not going to be able to foot the entire bill itself.

"We've got real numbers with real projects and real needs," York Regional chairperson Bill Fisch said.

In all, planners estimate the region will need \$6.4 billion from Queen's Park to keep pace with growth.

On Thursday, York council gave the go-ahead to tell Queen's Park exactly that.

If the provincial government wants York Region to put up another 500,000 people over the next 25 years, it needs help make it happen.

Mr. Fisch said the government is beginning to "understand that in order to achieve these goals there's more than just saying, 'Please do it.'"

Since the unveiling of the province's Places to Grow legislation in 2005, questions have been raised about how to pay for the infrastructure and social services needed to support a massive population increase.

The region wants the province to

commit to long-term infrastructure planning to go along with its long-term growth plan.

Places to Grow orders municipalities to ensure that 40 per cent of new population growth is within their already-developed areas. This means a new regime of high density housing, particularly in centres earmarked in Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Newmarket and Markham.

Recent census numbers helped quantify the extent of growth in York Region and that helps the cause, Mr. Fisch said.

"Anecdotally, we have been telling them, but now we have proof positive."

Several items from the report, passed by council Thursday, were addressed in last month's provincial and federal budgets. These included the extension of Highway 404 into East Gwillimbury and funding for the subway and Viva transit projects.

The report also noted a domino-like effect that can follow from something like failing to provide adequate roads.

For example, the 1,500-acre Vaughan Enterprise Zone requires the extension of Highway 427 and a Keswick Business Park couldn't proceed until a firm date for the completion of the 404 extension is in place.

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