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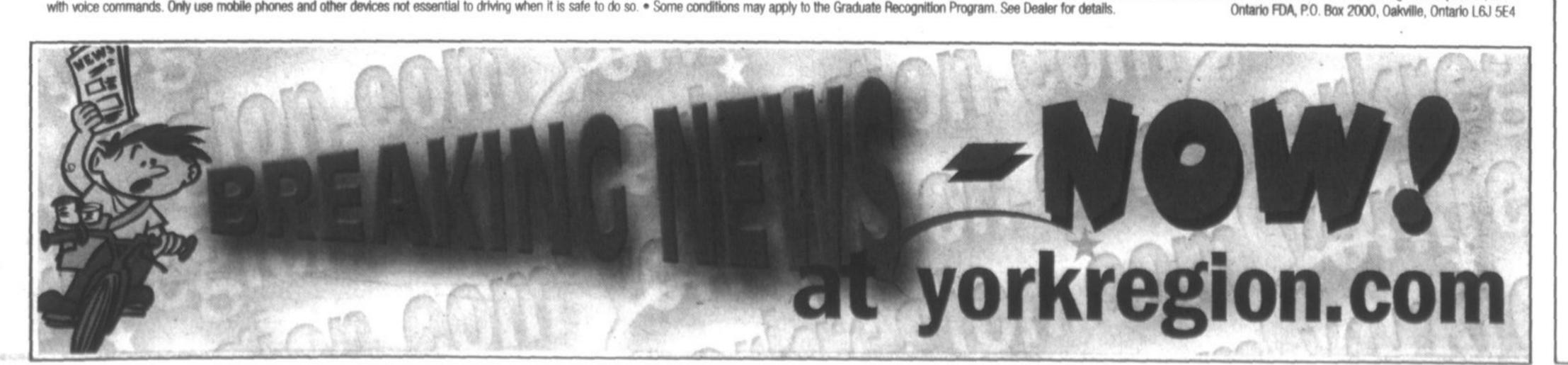
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Perfect storm for floods: climatologist

BY JESSICA YOUNG Staff Writer

Don't ask for spring just yet.

You may be praying for the snow to melt, but David Phillips, an Aurora resident and senior climatolog ist at Environment Canada, says you should be careful what you wish for.

"We want a rush out of winter, but that could be a recipe for creating enormous water standing around," Mr. Phillips said. "This is the snowiest winter on record."

Observations at the Toronto Buttonville Municipal Airport indicated a whopping 239 cm of snowfall for this winter so far, almost double the amount of a snowfall during this time last year, Mr. Phillips said.

Currently there is 43 cm of snow on the ground at Buttonville, he said, beating out the record of 24 cm in 1993.

Many just want to be able to walk outside without a jacket, but if the snow melts all at once, Mr. Phillips warns the region will need to prepare for dangerous waters and the potential for flooding.

"This is an issue, but not a crisis we can't get out of. We're almost developing the perfect 'storm' for flood issues," he said.

Rivers and lakes may look safe to walk on or go near, but keep children away from these areas during the spring thaw, Mr. Phillips said. Bodies of water may look like they have hard, icy surfaces, but there is the potential for a water rush and ice breaking, he said.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority issued a media advisory on the annual spring melt for this month, Tom Hogenbirk, the organization's manager of engineer and technical services said.

"It is a deceptive time of year. The banks of creeks and rivers are very slippery and everyone should stay away from them," he said.

Another preventive measure is keeping storm drains clear.

"People need to have their civic mindedness and unclog storm drains. We don't want to see water building up," Mr. Phillips said.

Picking up garbage by the sewer drain sounds gross, but keep in mind it helps water flow properly.

Remove snow or ice by the drain's opening as well, said Eve Patterson, Insurance Bureau of Canada's Ontario regional manager.

If a sewer backs up, insurance can cover it if you have that type of protection in your policy, which most people do, Ms Patterson said.

WAL-MART CORRECTION NOTICE

Snuggle Liquid Fabric Softener (#1335458)

advertised in our current flyer (expiring March 22nd) will not be available.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.