

Teens get access to dental program

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

York Region council has approved the expansion of the Children in Need of Treatment program for 2009, with the help of \$1.38-million from the Ministry of Health Promotion.

Since 1989, the program has been providing financial assistance to eligible children up to age 14 who require preventative, urgent and essential dental treatment.

The expansion will increase access to dental services for eligible youth up to age 17.

Investing in oral health of lower-income families is part of the province's poverty reduction strategy.

Provincial funding to expand the 2009 program is a positive move, regional chairperson Bill Fisch said.

However, the current funding arrangement does not allow for adequate staffing, nor does it address the increase in the cost to York Region for program implementation after this year, he said.

Beginning in 2010, the expanded program costs will move to the current 75/25 per cent cost-sharing formula between the province and York Region. Using 2008 data, this would cost the region an extra \$350,000 annually.

Older youth in the expanded program will not receive in-school

screening and preventative or routine follow-up services from public health staff. Instead, they will need to access these services through community dentists.

Public health dental clinic locations have also been re-aligned in response to geographic demands and to increase screening availability.

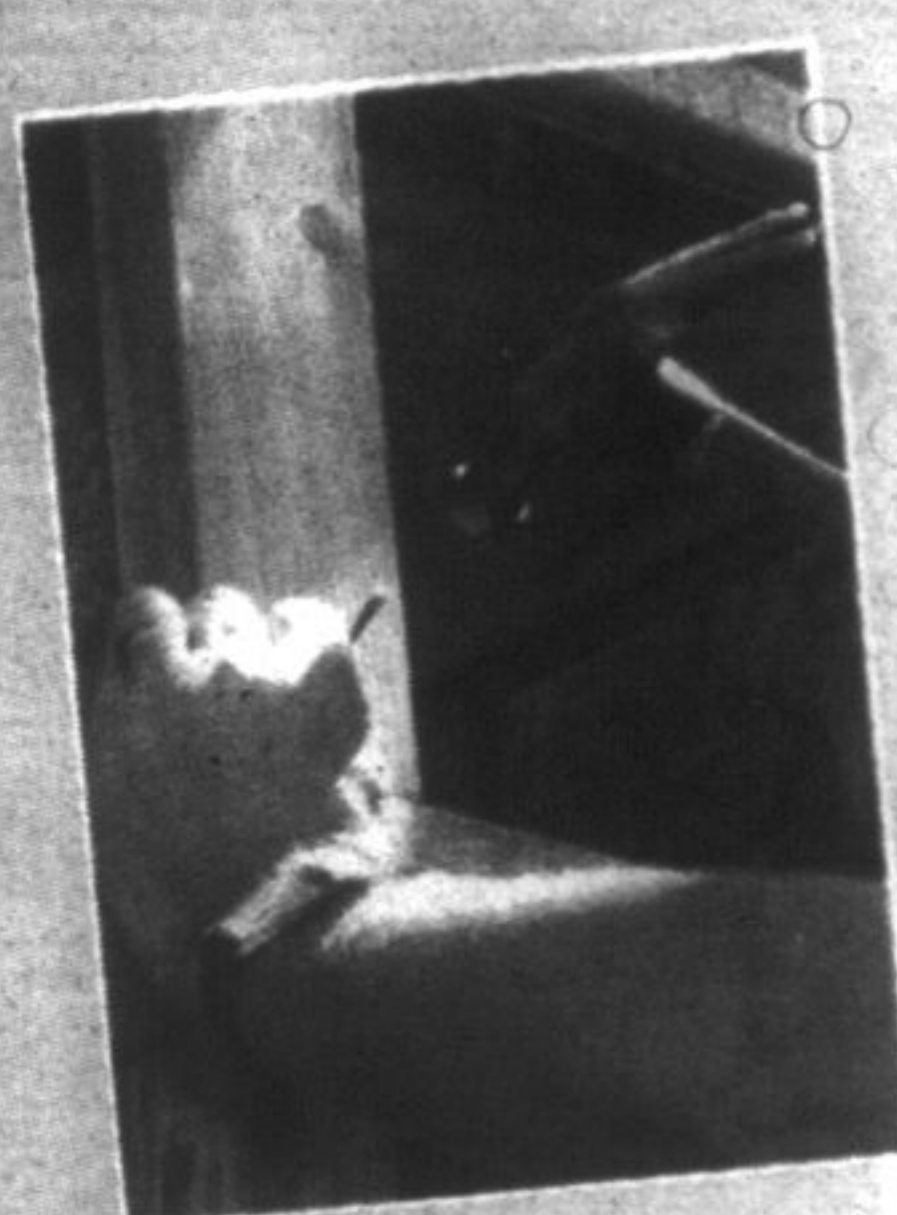
The expanded program could provide care to an estimated additional 2,200 York Region youth living in low-income families, Mr. Fisch said.

In 2008, more than 2,000 children under the age of 14 living in York Region benefited from the Children in Need of Treatment program.

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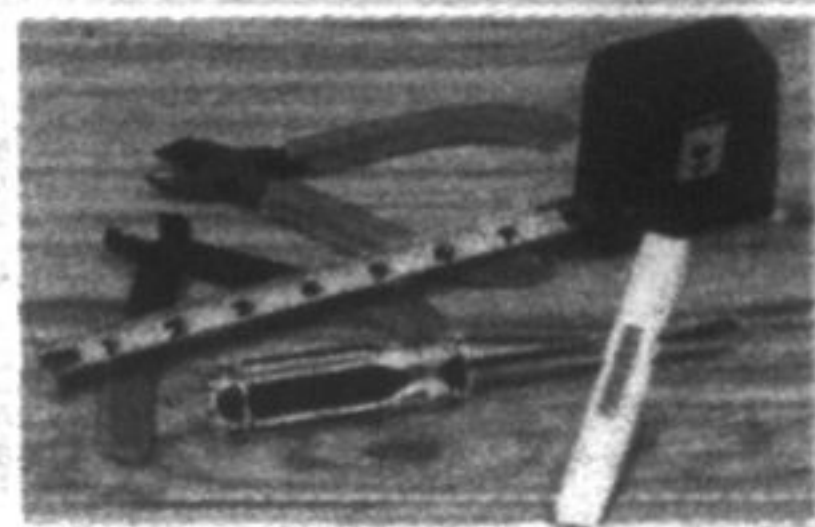
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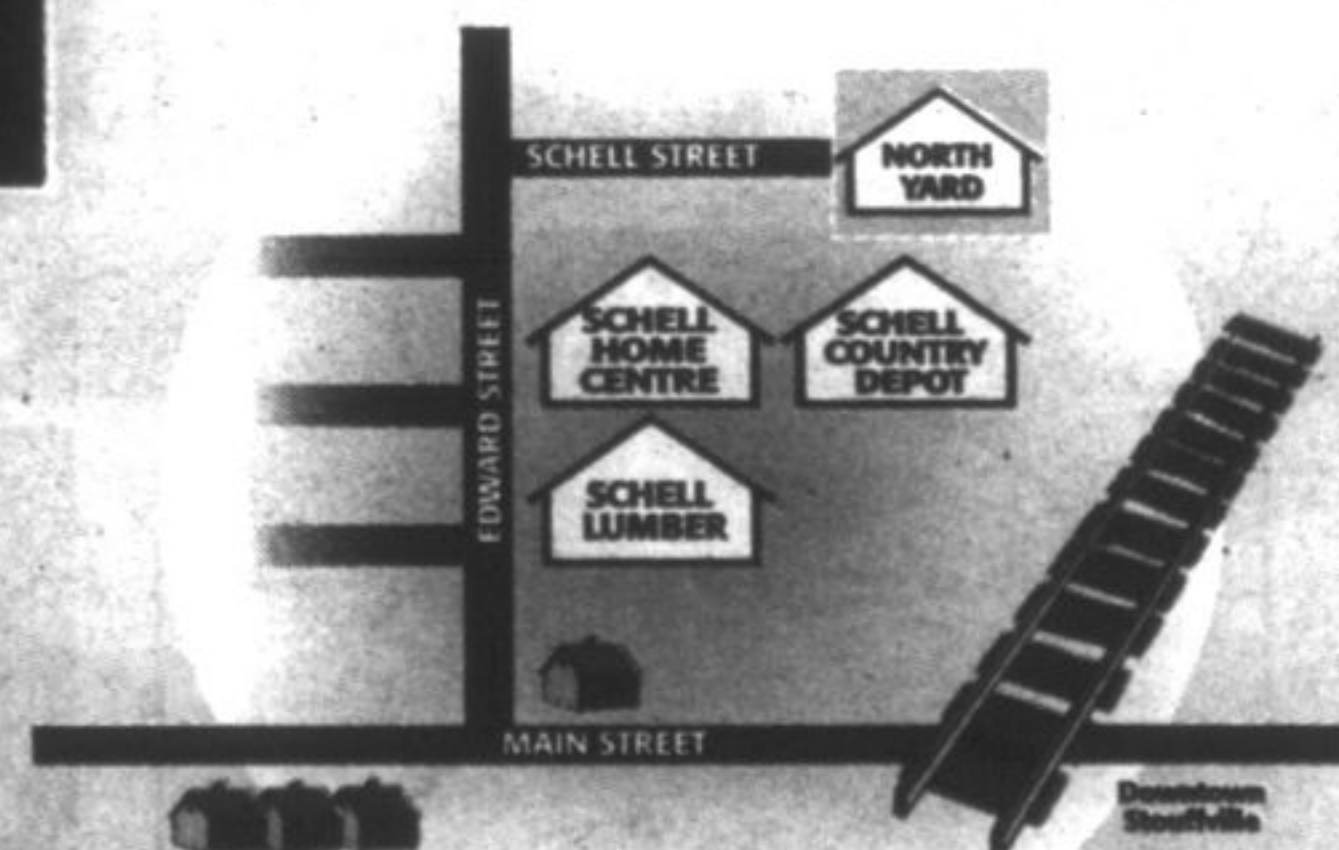
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