

'Silent' farm sector getting boost in Stouffville, King

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How can the town help its agricultural and rural businesses?

That is what municipal staff is hoping to learn through its King WS Cultivating Business: An Agricultural and Rural Business Retention and Expansion project.

It is a follow-up to the 2006-07 Business Retention and Expansion project for local businesses, which resulted in the creation of a number of initiatives including the town's economic development strategy, employment land protection policies and the downtown Stouffville community improvement plan.

The project is expected to cost \$40,000

with 50 per cent of the funding coming from the province. The town's portion is \$9,425.

Approval for the grant is still pending.

"We have a solid application and we've spoken to our ministry advisors and they've been very encouraging," said Rebecca Mustard, economic development officer for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

If funding is approved, the remaining costs — \$10,575 — will be shared between the project partners, which are King Township, York Region, the York Federation of Agriculture, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce and the King Chamber of Commerce.

The project will look at, in part, individual business concerns as well as promote aware-

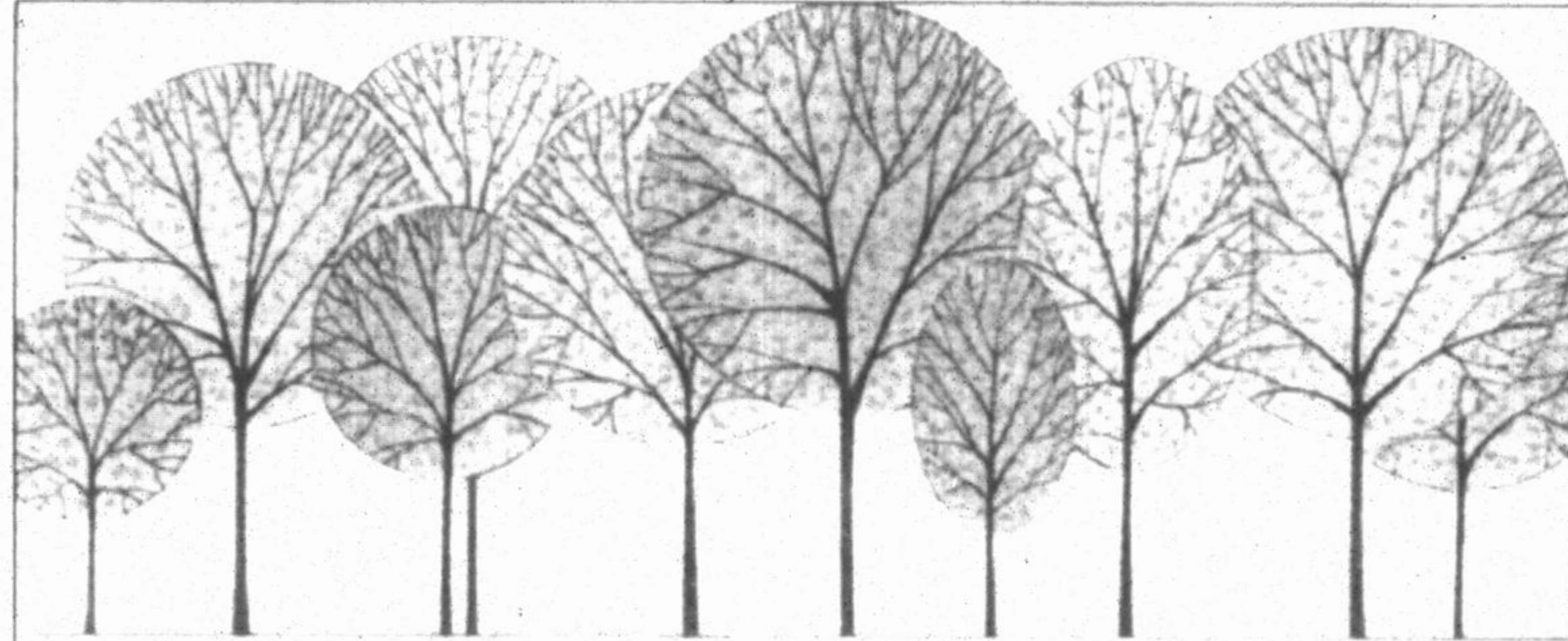
ness of support currently available to businesses and provide baseline information.

In the 2006 Agricultural Census, it identified that approximately 45 per cent of Whitchurch-Stouffville's land was being utilized for agricultural production. When combined with the municipality's rural area, they account for more than 80 per cent of its land base.

"(Agriculture) comes across as a silent industry. But it's incredibly vibrant in the area," Ms Mustard said.

If the funding is approved, more than 100 agricultural and rural businesses will be surveyed, with about 50 of them from within Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"If all goes well, the project will wrap up the end of March next year," Ms Mustard said.



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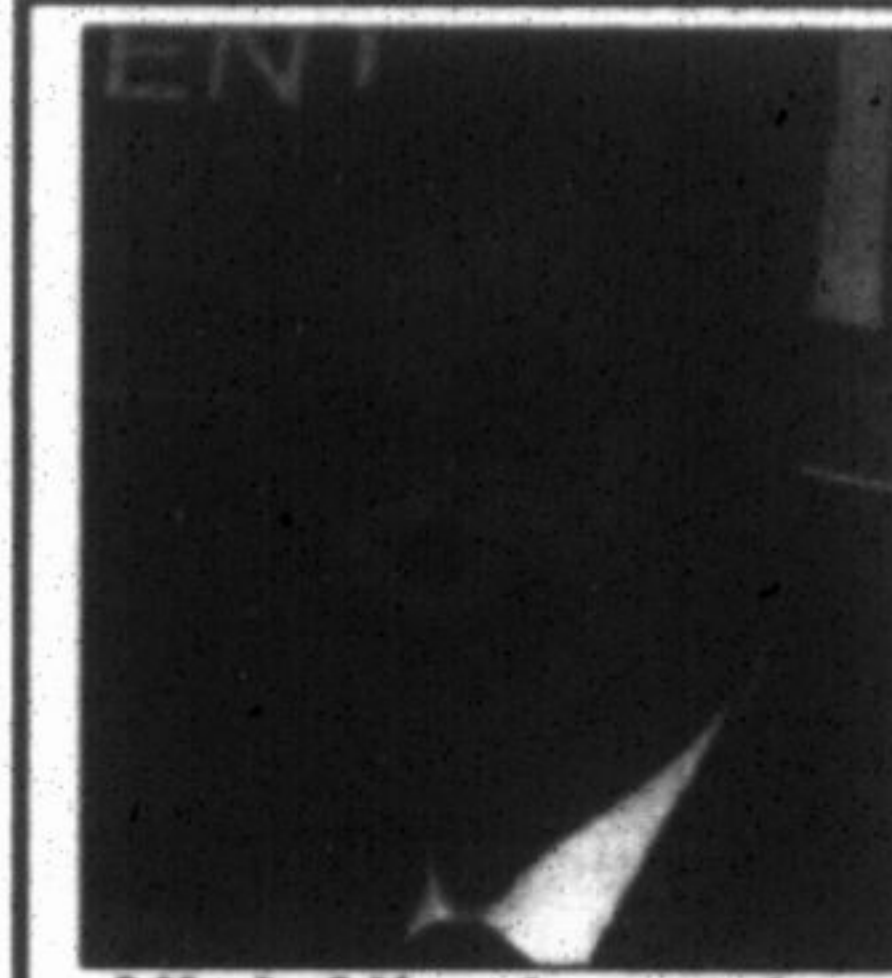
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