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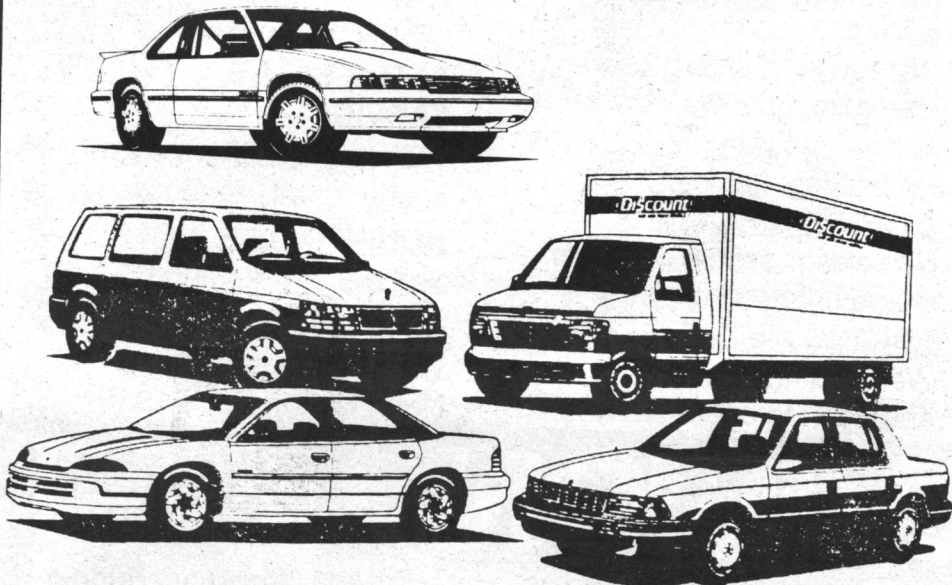
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Cops consider link-up system

By Stephanie Henderson
 Special to HHTW

Halton police will try to link up with other regional services to avoid picking up the full replacement fill for a new radio system.

The Halton Regional Police Services Board has until mid-January to convince other regional departments to share the cost of a "trunk" radio system, which would link all regional emergency services (police, fire and ambulance).

Under the current system, police dispatchers contact other services, when needed, by telephone. Regional staff have also identified

some potential non-regional users who may benefit from the trunk system, including public works and transit departments in area municipalities.

If the police cannot reach a workable cost arrangement, they will likely opt for a conventional radio system to replace the existing 17-year-old communications system, police services board chair Barry Quinn told the region's administration and finance committee.

The financially challenged police board recently laid off five full-time and two part-time civilian work-

ers in order to meet preliminary budget figures, but is appealing the decision at the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. The jobs went when it was decided that night service at police stations would be cut in 1994.

Quinn believes the trunk system, which he says is becoming the new standard for Canadian municipalities, is the best system. However, it would cost \$8 million to implement, compared to \$5 million for a conventional system.

Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy said he is concerned about the impact buying the system will have on future regional budgets.

"I have concerns that the police budget can't even handle a conventional system," he told committee members and police staff.

Until the issue is revisited in January, the committee agreed to ask the federal government to reserve radio frequency channels for the Halton trunk system. Competition for the channels is quite high, Quinn noted.

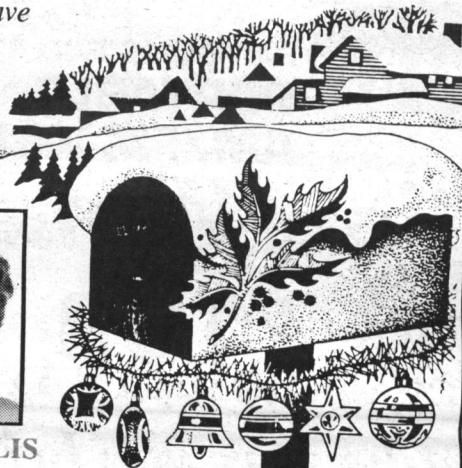
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