

Grounded until further notice

Fate of police helicopter up in the air

Evaluation follows last flight for chopper's test phase this Sunday

By **HOWARD MOZEL**
Special to *The Champion*

Halton Regional Police's whirlybird eye-in-the-sky will soon be grounded until further notice.

According to Halton Regional Police Superintendent Paul Cormier, time is running out on the test phase of the initiative and the last scheduled Halton flight is set for Sunday.

After that, an independent consultant will evaluate the program's relative merits and report back in March, 2000.

"The recommendations will be up to the consultant," he said. "We want it to be totally independent."

In April, Ontario's solicitor general announced that \$900,000 would be spent on four, 20-week helicopter evaluation projects in the province, \$250,000 of which was earmarked for the joint Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth and Peel regions project.

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SUPERINTENDENT PAUL CORMIER

In addition to provincial funding, each region kicked in \$100,000. Pilot projects also took place in Toronto, London and York/Durham regions.

Superintendent Cormier explained that funds were set aside at the start to pay for the consultant, who will evaluate the program for Halton, Peel and Hamilton-Wentworth.

Once these findings are in, Superintendent Cormier said the debate will begin about the value of continuing a helicopter program and the costs attached.

No firm decision will likely be made next year, Superintendent Cormier continued, since by March the region's 2000 budget will have already been decided.

"It would be inappropriate to budget for it until

the evaluation is complete," he said.

The helicopter included a fully steerable, 30-million candlepower searchlight, a thermal imaging system, video cameras and more.

This makes the chopper an ideal tool for apprehending criminal suspects in events ranging from police pursuits to rescues on both land and in waterways.

Superintendent Cormier admitted some residents have complained about the noise of the helicopter and the intrusive searchlight at night.

Police have responded to every objection, the superintendent said, and explained to people exactly what the aircraft was doing in each instance.

"We didn't convince everyone, but a large majority were satisfied with the explanation," he said.

The organizers of all the pilot projects are now required to submit interim and final reports on how the funding was used.

Once evaluations are completed, a report will be forwarded to the solicitor general.

For goodness sake . . .



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The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is enough to stress anyone out. Have you been feeling uptight or hyped lately? If the stress is getting to you, try making a little quiet time for yourself. Take a deep breath, close your eyes, and relax for 5 to 10 minutes. Strive to find your own sense of inner peace as you unwind. It's amazing how refreshed you'll feel. Now you are ready to tackle the next item on your "To Do" list.

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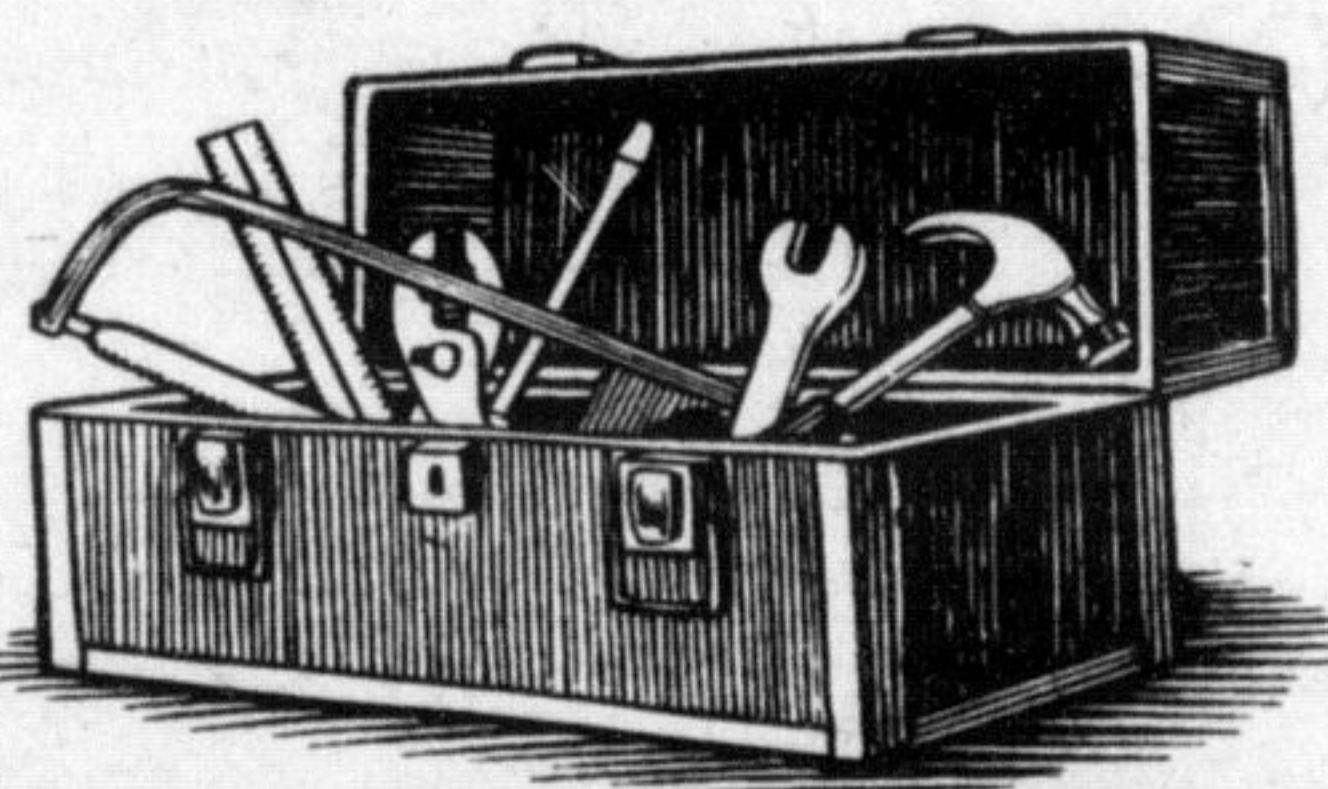
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✓ Millennium bash

Mayor advises merchants to get down to business

Local businesses and community groups can make a profitable start to the new millennium by getting involved in Milton's blow-out New Year's bash.

By sponsoring events, selling millennium merchandise or offering premiums and incentives, the bash will give local businesses the opportunity to connect with potentially thousands of new customers, said Mayor Gord Krantz.

"In the true spirit of the a community event, we're really encouraging participation from surrounding businesses to help us put on an incredible millennium celebration," he said.

And all participating businesses and community organizations will be recognized on the Town's website.

The New Year's celebration will kick off at 7 p.m. Two stages will blast out a variety of home-grown entertainment acts, and food and a beer tent will be on hand for revelers.

The evening will culminate with a cascade of fireworks over the Mill Pond at midnight.

Thousands of people are expected at the event that will see Mill Street shut down between James and Martin streets to accommodate the crowds.

For more information on how to get involved, call Milton 2000 events committee Chair Paul Scherer at 878-9124.

Season's Greetings from *Bavarian Chalet Restaurant*

Christmas Day December 25
2 sittings - 2 pm & 4:30 pm
\$37.00 p.p. Children under 12 \$20.00
Boxing Day Sunday Brunch
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Tues. - Sun. Lunch and Dinner

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