

Milton short on doctors

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other Halton doctors with a similar policy.
But he does know that the pressure has been building in Halton's overworked doctors.

"Basically, this is a reflection of the frustration, stress and probably anger a lot of physicians are facing over the system," said Dr. Nosal.

He assured residents that patient health won't be compromised by a one-complaint policy.

"To take a proper history and physical exam, there are questions that need to be asked," said Dr. Nosal. "I'm confident those questions would be asked."

Though an eight-minute time slot for patient visits sounded right, it's for uncomplicated cases only, he added.

"Those are for minor, intermediate sessions," he said. "There are others that would take more time."

Booking a new appointment for each ailment will help ensure enough time is set aside for each complaint without impacting other patients, said Dr. Maley. But it's not a gambit to pad doctors' wallets.

In its current form, the billing structure compensates for more complicated cases. In other words, the tougher a patient's problem, the higher the fee.

And then there's the time factor.
"We have more patients than we know how to deal with," said Dr. Maley.

And the situation isn't likely to improve without an infusion of more doctors in the system.

Currently, 21,000 doctors practice in Ontario. But that number is expected to drop to 18,000 by 2010, said Dr. Maley.

That loss will be exacerbated by a simultaneous increase in the general population.

And a slashing of medical school enrollments in the early 1990s means there won't be enough new graduates to cover the loss.

"There is a health care crisis," said Dr. Maley. "We don't have enough doctors."

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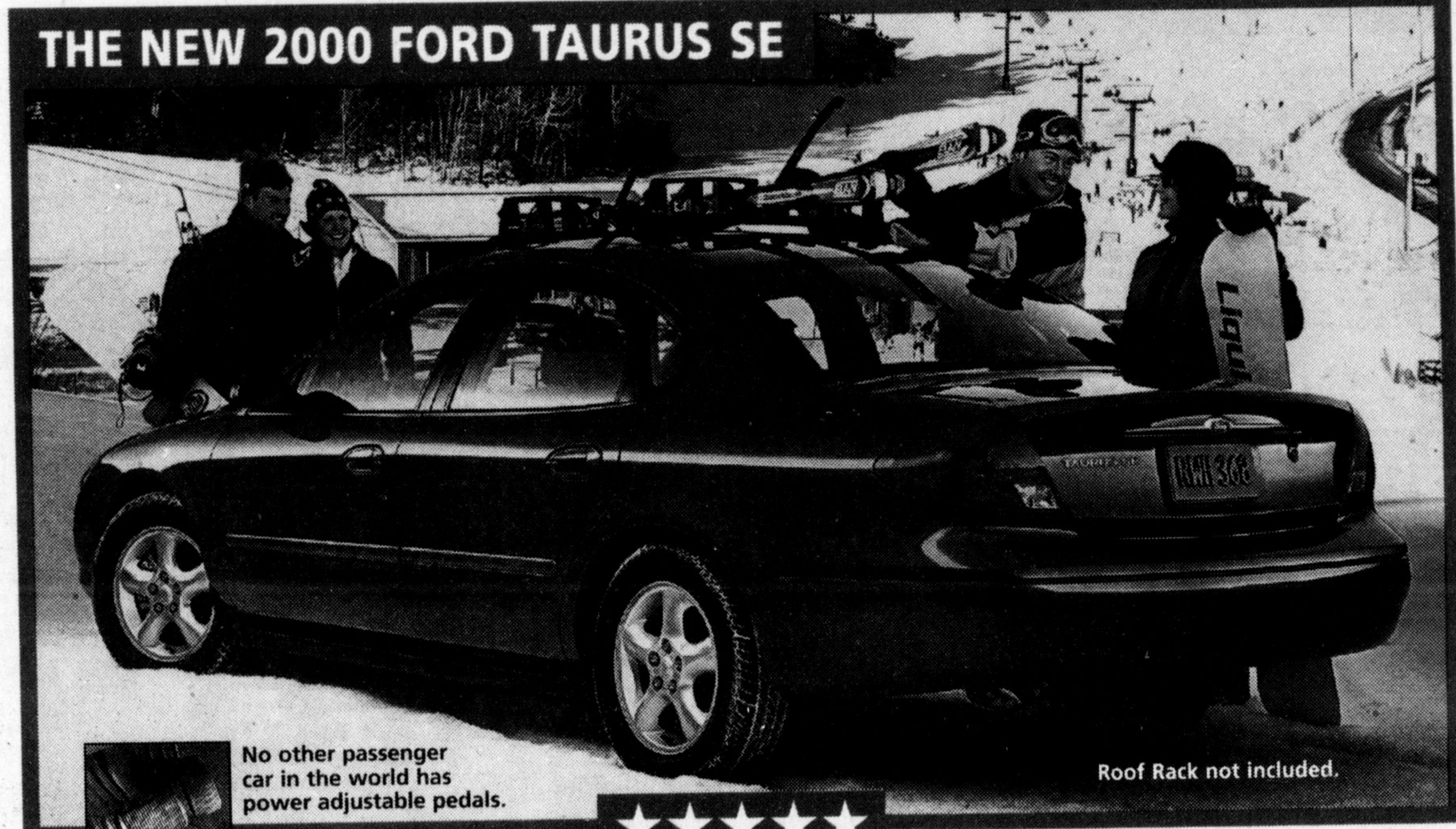
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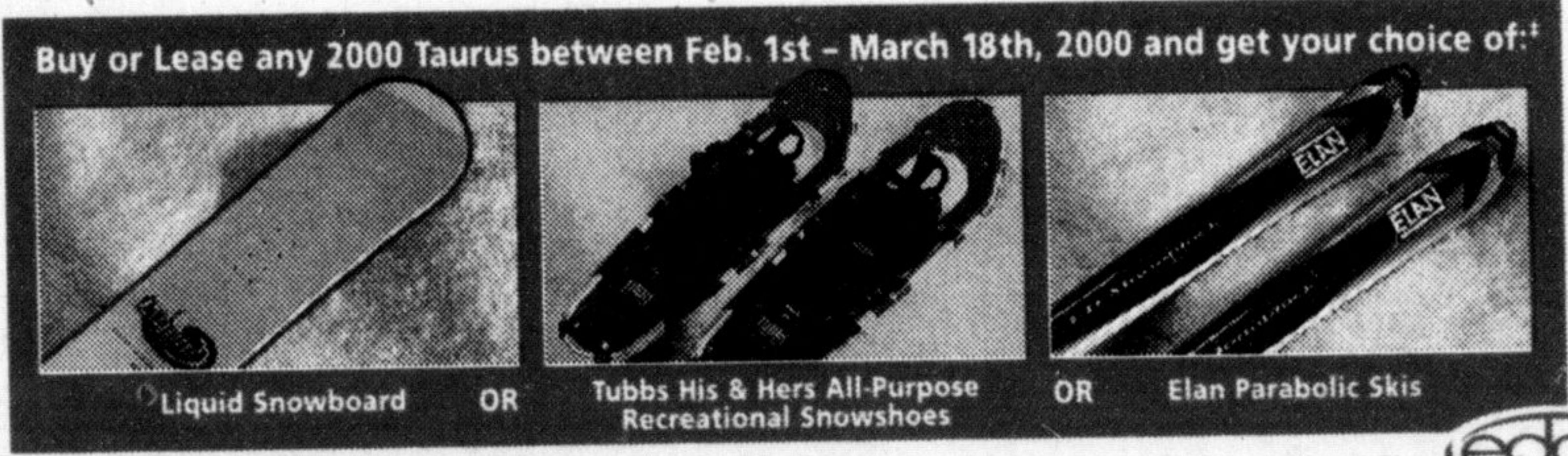
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