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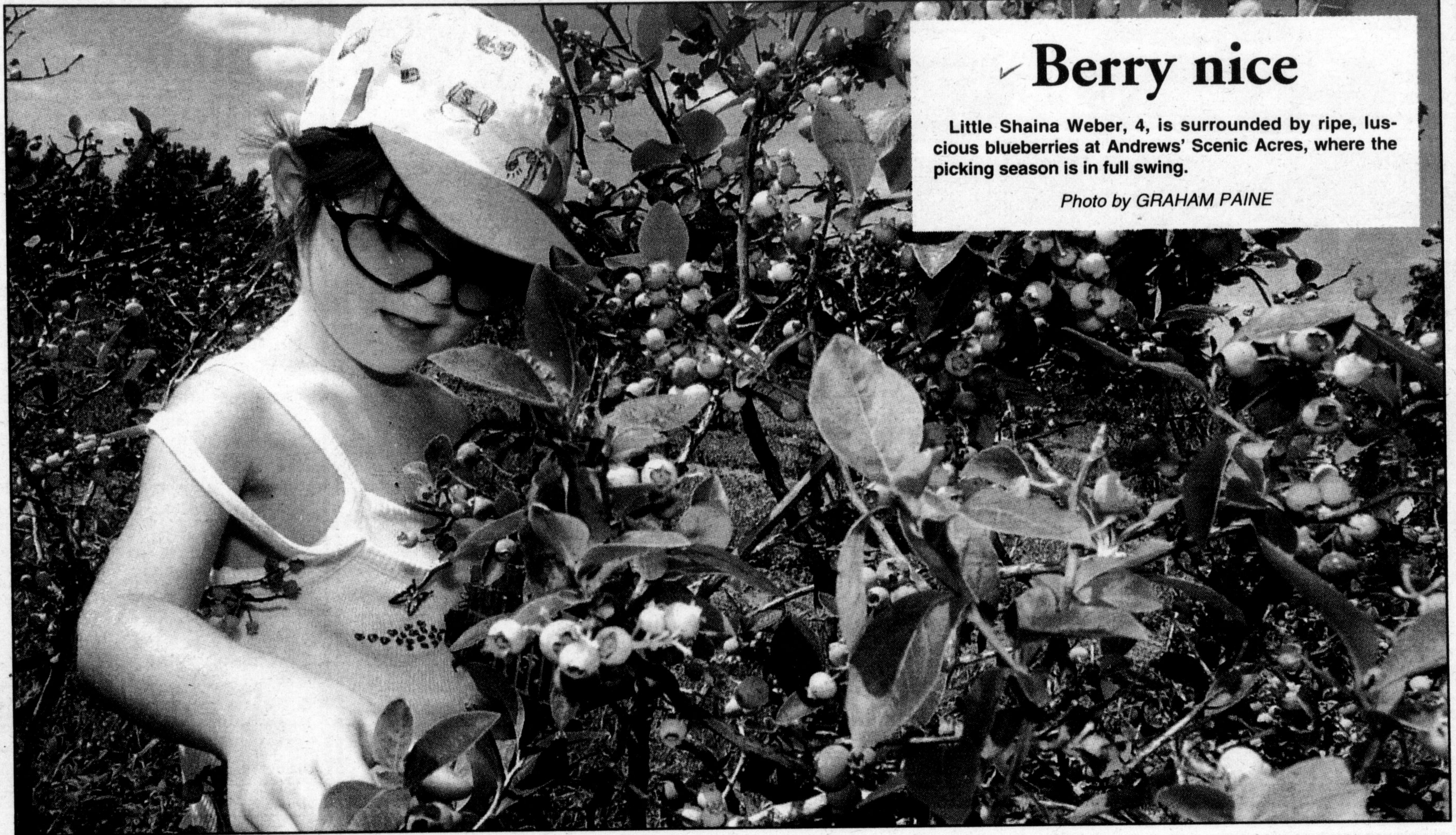
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## Berry nice

Little Shaina Weber, 4, is surrounded by ripe, luscious blueberries at Andrews' Scenic Acres, where the picking season is in full swing.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Torrents of rain has Region scrambling

By IRENE GENTLE  
*The Champion*

Halton staff are working to bail out from a severe May rainstorm that buffeted the area, regional council heard earlier this month.

Torrents of rain pounded Halton during the two-day thunderstorm, flooding creeks and homes and backing up sewer systems.

"The storm was anywhere between a 25 and 50-year storm event but the flood levels that occurred were closer to a 100-year event," said Halton's Planning Director Pat Murphy.

Up to 85 mm of rain were recorded during the tempest, but higher levels may have been experienced in parts of the region.

The unprecedented flow has staff scrambling to investigate the causes of flooding as well as their

own service procedures.

Halton's infiltration allowance — or how much water the system can bear — was calculated in the 1970s based on the worst case scenario available at the time. But the spring gusher overflowed that marker.

"There's no question that the storm event of May 12 and 13 was extremely taxing," said Halton's Director of Legal Services Mark Meneray. "In a normal year, our procedures work very well."

Those who worked through the storm had colourful memories of it.

"There were houses where cars floated away," described Mr. Murphy. "There were houses where the water was up to the first floor window."

A report on the flooding will come before council, but it isn't clear how soon.

"I can't give a specific date," said Mr. Murphy.

"There's a lot of work to be done."

The two-day deluge hit south Halton harder than the north and spawned 180 flood calls to the Region. It also triggered a review of the Region's ex-gratia grant fund — literally translated as "act of grace." That's available to homeowners experiencing localized sewer back-ups.

So far, \$40,000 has been paid out of the fund, at an upset limit of \$250 per household.

But council approved increasing the grant from \$250 to \$500, retroactive to January, 2000.

The wording of the fund will also be fine-tuned so people have a clearer idea of how it works, said Mr. Meneray. "The original intent was to arrive at an amount which would provide homeowners with the insurance deductible."

Even with all that in place, residents should purchase flood insurance as a safeguard, said Burlington Councillor John Taylor.

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