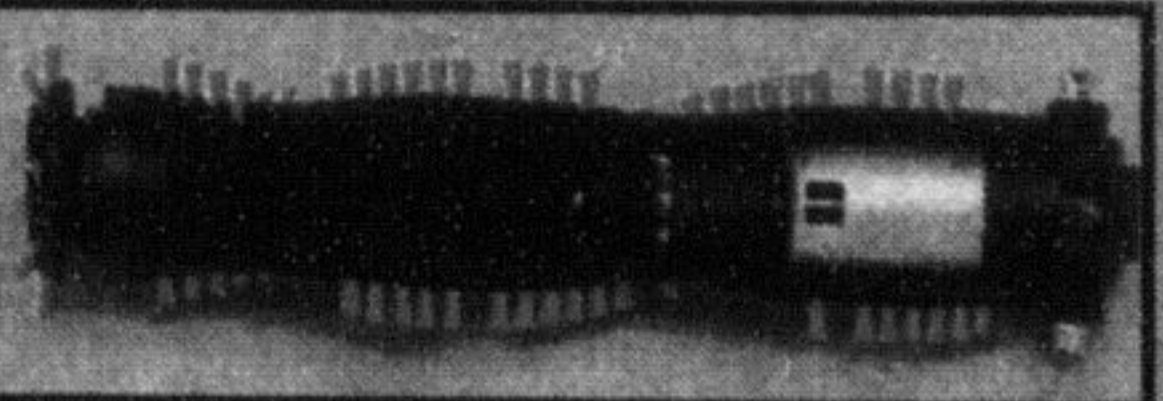


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Region needs roadwork funding

By **IRENE GENTLE**

The Champion

An Oakville stretch of the gridlocked QEW could be untied in four years. But only if Provincial funding is locked in first.

Preliminary design work is now underway on the mainly logjammed highway just east of Third Line to 1 km east of Trafalgar Road, Halton's planning and public works committee heard November 22.

"The number one problem is clearly traffic congestion," acknowledged Paul Hudspith, a senior project manager with URS Cole Sherman, the company contracted by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to do the design work.

"And we also have to consider safety and operational improvements."

The intent is to widen the highway from six to eight lanes of traffic. The current median would also be widened to 7.7 metres.

Acceleration lanes would be increased, and retaining walls built to decrease any impact on nearby property values.

But a design difficulty comes in the form of a

bridge over Sixteen Mile Creek near Kerr Street, which can't accommodate the widened highway as it is.

Three options have been put on the table. They include twinning the current bridge with a new structure on the north side, which would displace about 15 homes currently on the site.

Placing it to the south, which is the second option, would displace about 17 burials in the St. Mary's Cemetery.

The final alternative is to widen the bridge equally on the north and south sides, which could lead to structural durability issues.

Currently, neither option is favoured, said Mr. Hudspith.

"We don't have a technical preferred alternative yet," he told the committee. "That'll be something coming in the next few months."

But in spite of all the design work, there's no guarantee the project will get off the ground quickly, or at all. "We're at the very early stage of the planning process," said Karen Law of the MTO. "We're aiming for completion of a detailed plan by summer 2002. But that's a best case scenario."

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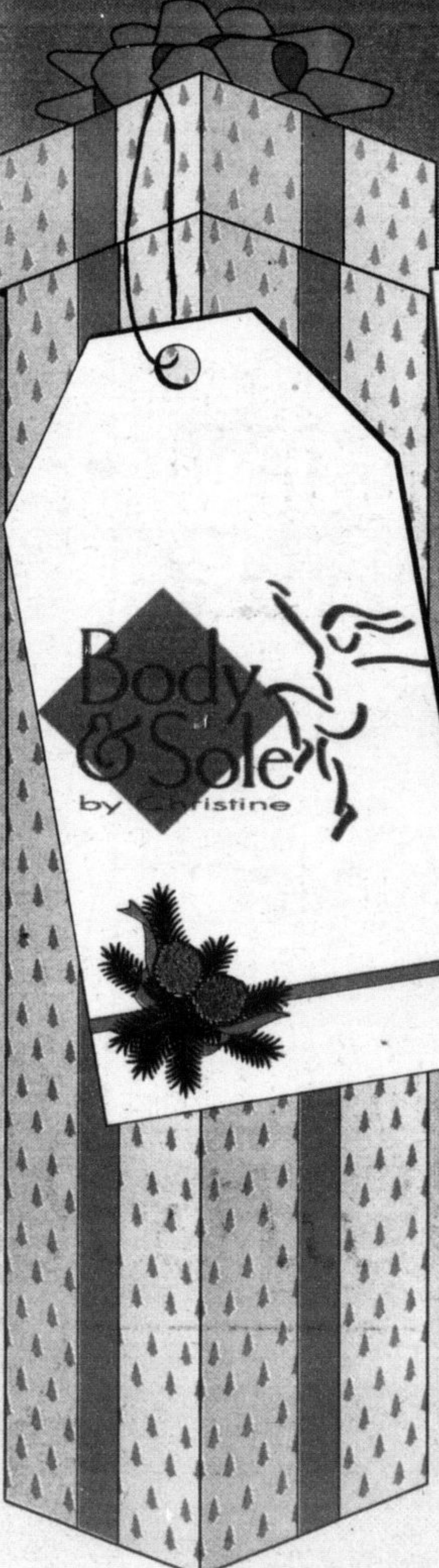
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