

Federal funding would help pay for infrastructure plans

Halton officials have their magnifying glasses ready in case there's good news in upcoming federal balance sheets.

A \$2-billion funding program to help provincial and municipal governments with large infrastructure projects was announced in the recent federal budget.

But local observers note the Strategic Infrastructure Foundation funding has a condition attached.

"It will come out of their surplus," said Jane MacCaskill, Halton's commissioner of corporate services. "We're aware of this and we're keeping an eye out for it."

She said there's usually a delay in assembling such programs and the eligibility criteria.

But Ms MacCaskill noted federal officials must be expecting a sur-

plus to announce \$2 billion could be available.

Also announced was retention of previous federal budget commitments, including \$600 million for highways.

Halton officials will be watching for funding opportunities in a few areas.

"Roadways need considerable rehabilitation and significant work is required on water and wastewater plants," noted Ms MacCaskill.

Under the federal program, special consideration is given to public-private partnerships.

"Some are more suitable than others," said Ms MacCaskill. "Design build or financing schemes involving partners will qualify."

She said the federal govern-

ment's commitment to maintain a secure, open border indirectly affects Halton. Many of the region's businesses rely heavily on goods flowing freely between Canada and the U.S., noted Ms MacCaskill.

The beefing up of federal security forces could also affect Halton police.

"We need to look at what standards we may be required to meet," said Ms MacCaskill.

Regional chair Joyce Savoline said more details are needed about infrastructure funding, but she's pleased with the interest shown.

"I'm happy the federal government is talking about infrastructure and urban affairs," said Ms Savoline. "We greatly need an increased federal presence with urban municipalities in Canada."

Couple make court appearance

A Fifth Line couple charged with drug offences will return to court February 7 after making a brief appearance Thursday.

Theodore Luscombe, 45, and Brenda Luscombe, 39, who are charged with one count each of producing a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of

trafficking, appeared in Ontario court (provincial division) in Milton to set a trial date.

But because the defence has yet to review full disclosure, setting a trial date was postponed until next month.

Mr. and Ms Luscombe were arrested September 25 after Halton Regional Police seized 146 marijuana plants as well as hydroponics

growing equipment from a Fifth Line residence.

A hydroponics growing operation was discovered inside a barn adjacent to the home, while marijuana was also found in the basement.

The drug was also growing on the grounds outside.

The drugs seized have a potential street value of \$110,000.

"The business that considers itself immune to the necessity for advertising sooner or later finds itself immune to business."

Derby Brown

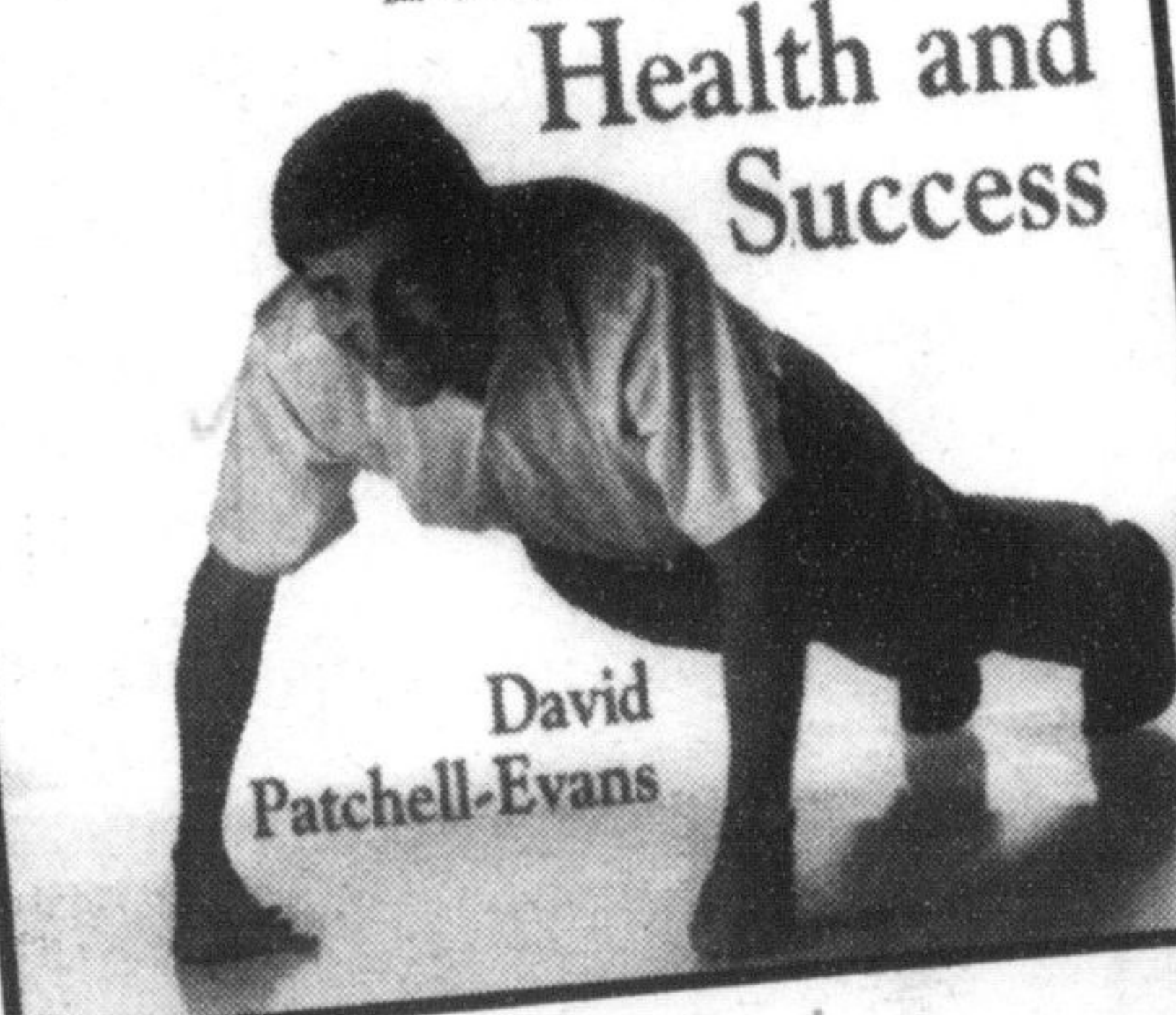
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