Restrictions may ease up around on-farm businesses

By RICHARD VIVIAN

The Champion

In an attempt to boost the economic state of the agriculture industry, Halton Region is considering reducing restrictions for onfarm businesses.

"The main concern is that farming, as an occupation in the rural areas, is in an economic crisis," explained Ho Wong, acting director of planning and transportation for the region. "What they can earn from the farming operation with the depressed commodity prices and other factors like the cost of equipment, it is no longer economical to farm, especially for new people who want to go into the farming business."

The on-farm business regulations are currently under consideration as part of the Region's Official Plan review. Mr. Wong said he expects to bring the issue to council within a matter of weeks.

One possibility being considered under the review is to broaden the field of acceptable on-farm business practices — which are currently limited to dry agriculturerelated practices.

"We have to try to balance between what we should allow and how we should allow it and still maintain the farming activity out in the rural area and maintain the character of it. We certainly don't want to have industrial subdivisions out there — that's not our intention," said Mr. Wong, adding he would reserve further comment until after the report for council is complete.

"We are working with the farming community to look at that particular issue. This is still in progress — we're still working on the details."

Once the report reaches regional

council, the issue will be open for discussion — in addition to a public consultation period.

The Region will also seek endorsement of any changes to the Official Plan from Milton town council prior its passing.

"The Town is fully involved in the regional Official Plan review and is participating fully in the agriculture review and discussion papers," said Bill Mann, manager of planning policy for the Town. "We (Town staff) haven't come to a conclusion as of yet — we want to review all the available information and participate in round-table discussions that will be occurring with the agriculture industry."

The Milton Official Plan expected to be reviewed later this year - is required to conform with any position taken in the Region's Official Plan.

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Preliminary hearing for suspect in Parrott murder set for May

The preliminary hearing for the suspect charged with first-degree murder in the slaying of a Milton man is set for May 3 in Burlington.

Douglas Stokes, 19, of Mississauga appeared in Ontario court (provincial division) in Burlington Tuesday.

The body of Mr. Parrott was found near the train

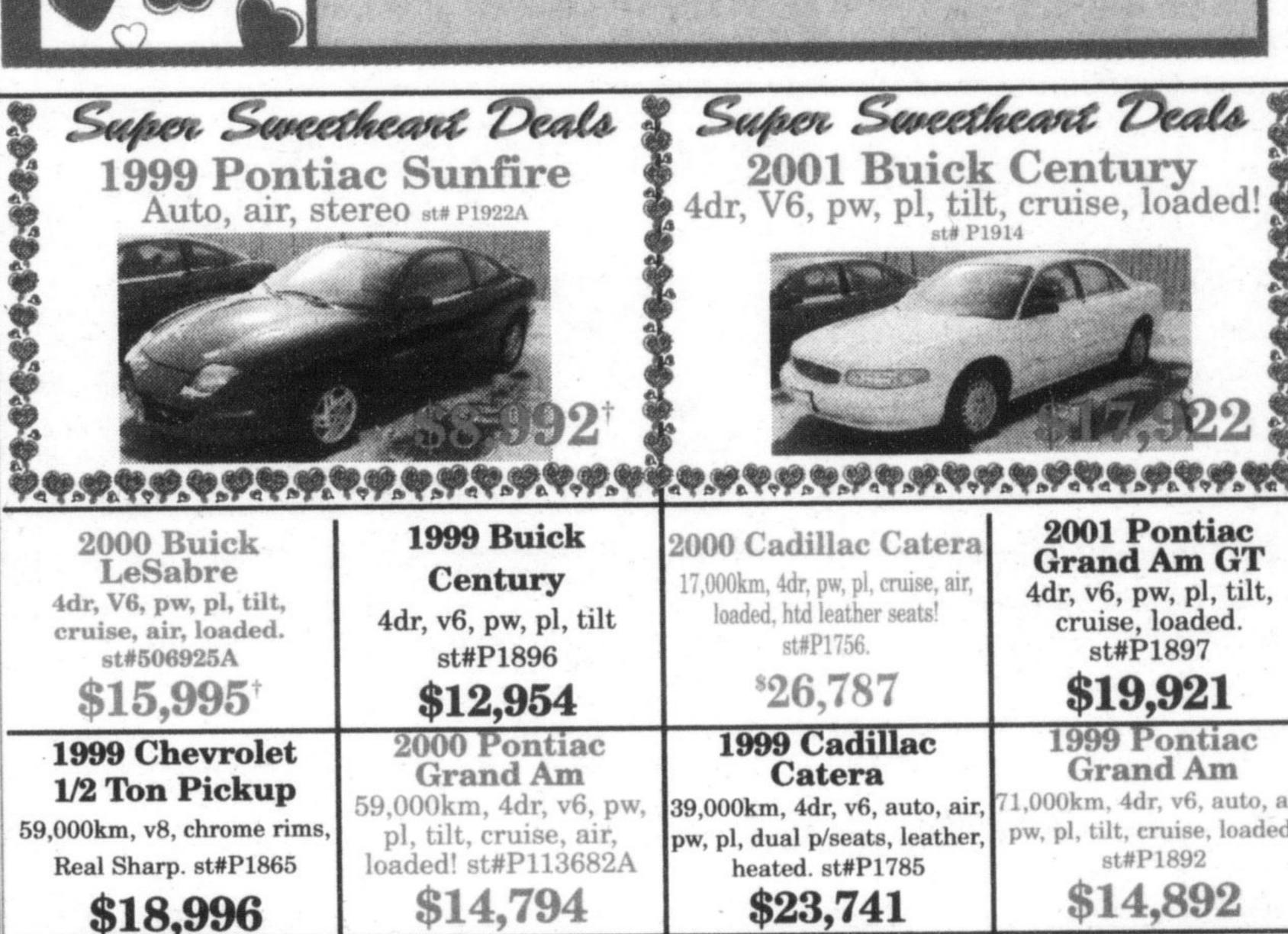
tracks, just north of Millside Drive, August 31.

A preliminary hearing is held to determine if enough evidence exists in the case to proceed to trial.

There's no word on how long the preliminary hearing will last or how many witnesses will be called.

Mr. Stokes was arrested in St. Catharines September 5 and remains in custody.





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