

# Hydro security deposits shouldn't be required by businesses, says Milton Chamber of Commerce

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**  
*The Champion*

The deadline for Milton Hydro security deposits has been extended by a month, but the Milton Chamber of Commerce feels the deposits shouldn't be necessary at all.

Asking long-time customers for a security deposit goes against generally accepted business models, Chamber Executive Director Sandy Martin told *The Champion*.

"From a business standpoint, the model is flawed in the eyes of the industries," she said.

"Usually, you do security checks prior to accepting a person as a client, giving them credit. After you have a long-term, successful relationship with these individuals, you don't normally go back and ask for them to secure their own risk."

In recent weeks, Milton Hydro has contacted large electricity consumers in town to inform them of a policy change that requires them to put up security deposits. Deposits are equal to the con-

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**SANDY MARTIN**

sumer's estimated costs for two and a half months.

With the incorporation of the local electricity distributor last year, Milton Hydro didn't have much of a choice but to seek the deposits, president Don Thorne said.

Without security deposits, the company has no way to recover its losses should customers go out of business.

"It's really a market structure issue and the way it's structured right now, we have no facility to deal with this risk as a corporation," he said.

Prior to incorporation, the Town-owned company had the ability to recover losses through taxation, but that option no longer exists. While recovery options outside of security deposits are non-existent at this time, Milton Hydro must still forward payment for electricity used to the wholesale provider or generator.

By extending the timeline for collecting the deposits, Mr. Thorne said it gives customers more time to look at their billing options and possibly reduce the size of deposit required. Rather than paying monthly, customers can switch to weekly billing or have their payments taken directly from their bank accounts. Either initiative would reduce the deposit amount.

Both Milton Hydro and the Chamber are seeking clarification on the issue from the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), the regulating body. Should an alternative method for loss recovery be approved, deposits will be returned. "We're going to work in a logical manner to get some clarity on the issues and hopefully come to a more palatable solution," commented Ms Martin.

A meeting between the Chamber and the OEB was scheduled for yesterday, but no information was available at press time.

**ONTARIO GOVERNMENT NOTICE**  
**NOTICE OF STUDY COMMENCEMENT**  
**AND OPPORTUNITIES**  
**FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**  
**Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor EA Terms of Reference**

**THE STUDY:**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has retained URS Cole, Sherman & Associates Ltd. to prepare a Terms of Reference (ToR) to guide the future preparation of a Route Location/Concept Design Individual Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor.

In June, 2001 the Premier and the Minister of Transportation announced the completion of the Niagara Peninsula Transportation Needs Assessment initiative. The key product of the needs assessment is a multi-modal Transportation Development Strategy – a "road map" to guide transportation investment. The Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor has been identified as one of the key elements in the Transportation Development Strategy. As a result, MTO has initiated the environmental assessment (EA) process for the potential new transportation corridor. The first step in the EA process is the preparation of an Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference. Other elements identified in the needs assessment study (i.e. road widening, transit improvements etc.) will be examined under separate initiatives.

**THE PROCESS:**

For an Individual EA, the Environmental Assessment Act requires that a proponent prepare a Terms of Reference (ToR) to define the scope of a proposed EA Study. The ToR requires approval by the Minister of Environment and Energy (MOEE) and the subsequent Individual EA is then prepared in accordance with the approved ToR.

The intention is to submit the ToR to MOEE for review in March 2003. The final product will be a ToR document which will provide a definitive scope for the subsequent Individual EA project.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES:**

In preparing the ToR, the Project Team will seek public input and comment via five rounds of Public Information Centres (PICs). The first and second round of PICs will be held in mid-July and mid-August of 2002 to present the overall study process and the Draft Needs Assessment. The third round of PICs will be held in September 2002 to present the Final Needs Assessment, study area conditions and the Draft EA framework and consultation plan. The fourth round of PICs will present components of the EA Terms of Reference and is anticipated to be held in November 2002. The fifth round of PICs are expected to be held in January 2003 to present the Final EA Terms of Reference.

A round of Public Workshops will be held between the third and fourth Public Information Centres to consult on outstanding issues related to the Needs Assessment and EA Route Planning.

Notices will be published in local newspapers for each round of PICs advising of meeting times and locations. Notices will be published the weeks prior to each of the above noted events.

**COMMENTS:**

Comments and information regarding this project are being collected to assist the Ministry of Transportation in meeting the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act. This material will be maintained on file for use during the project and may be included in project documentation. Information collected will be used in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

For further information, or to be added to the mailing list, please contact the following Project Team representatives or visit our Website (at the address below):

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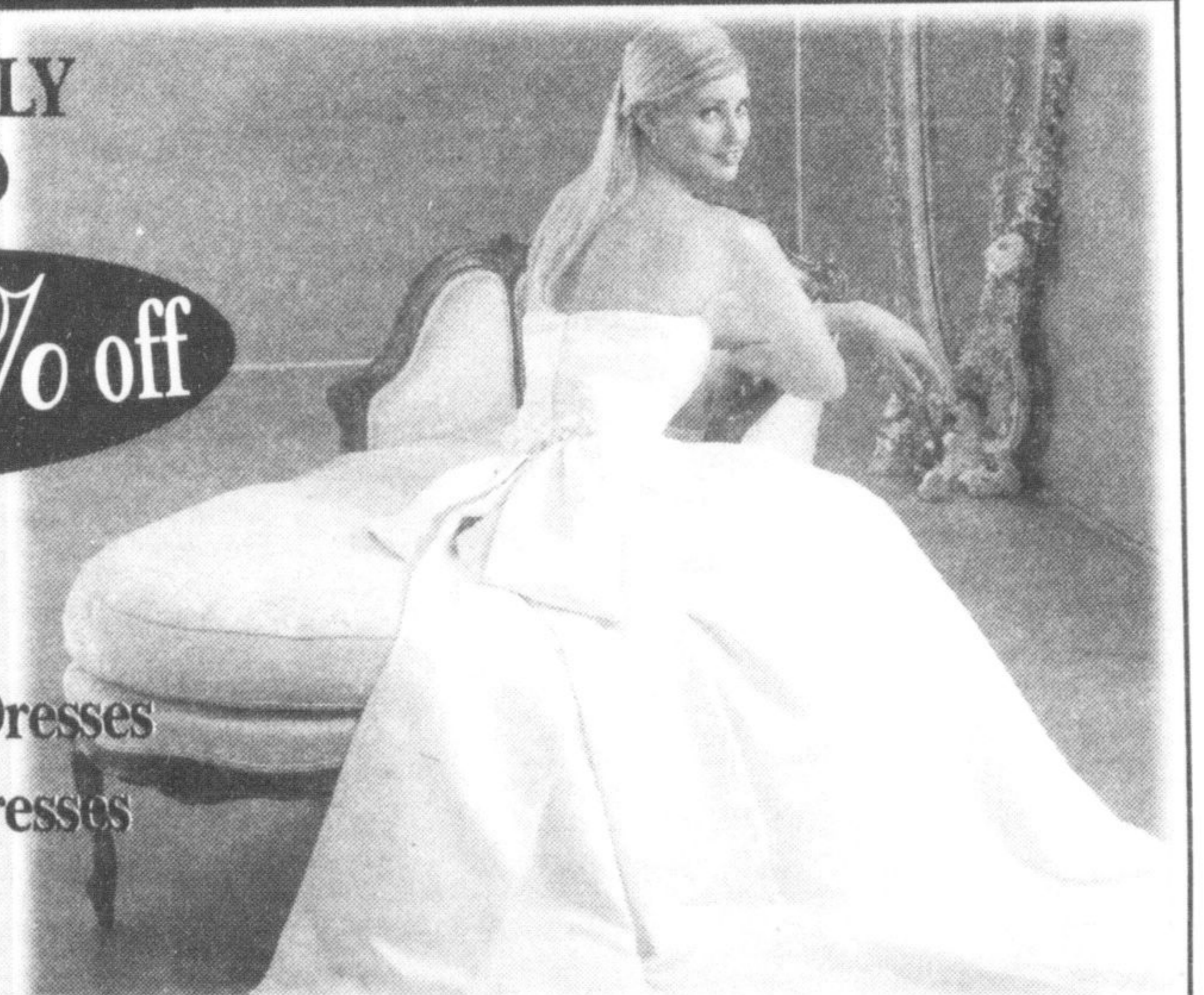
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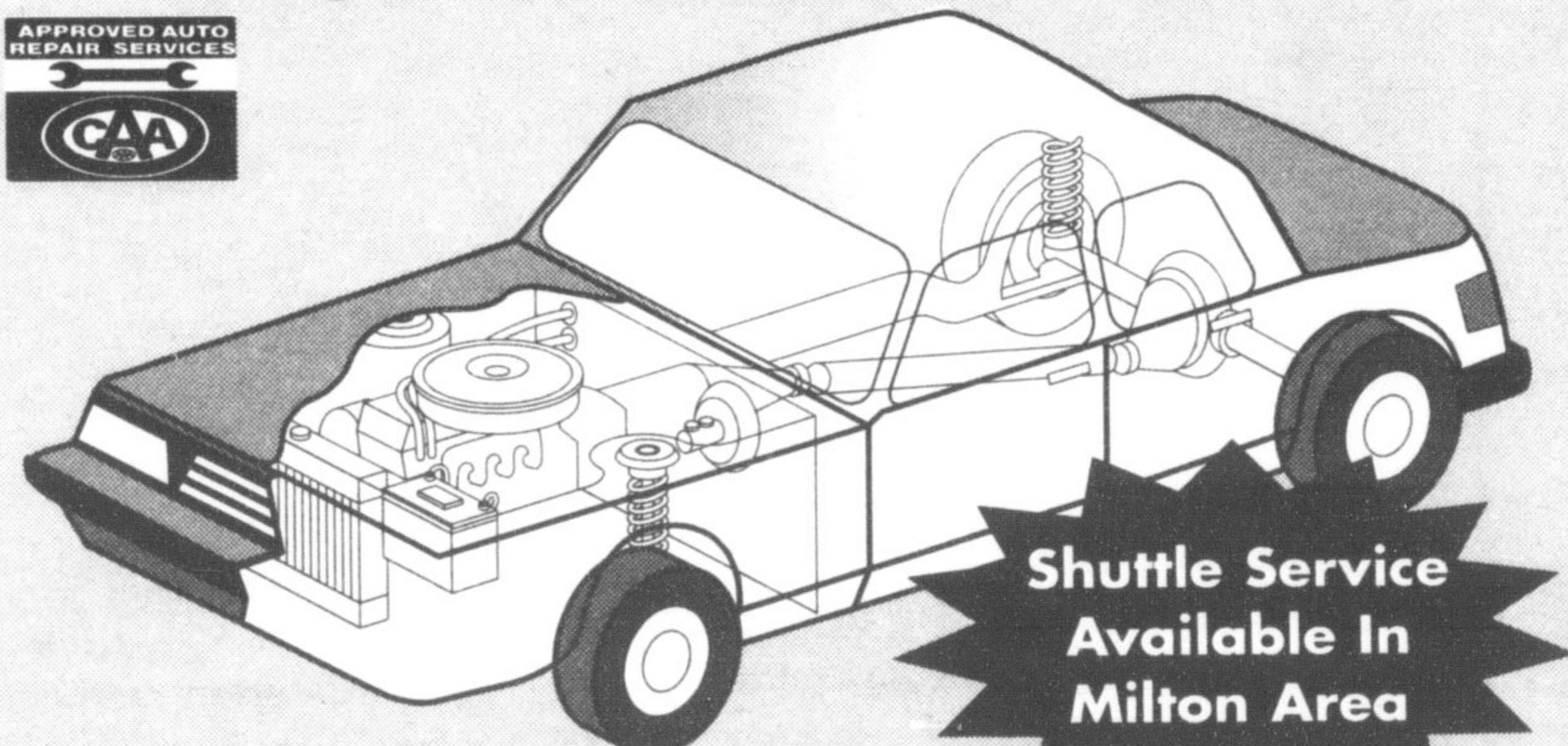


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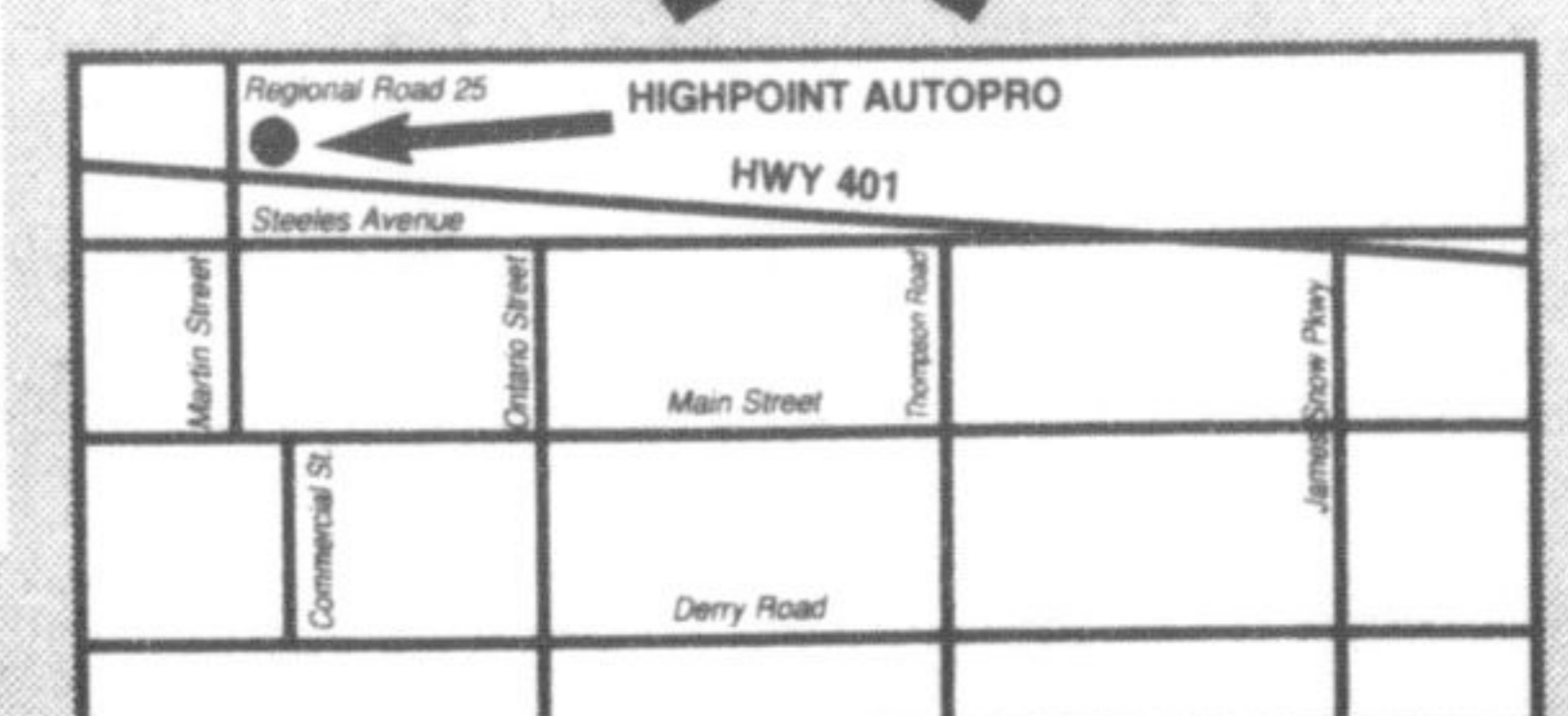
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