

Growth big reason for increase

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national average in its number of officers per capita. "We're doing a lot of great things out there," he stressed, noting that proactive policing programs and community partnerships have had a positive impact on crime rates.

With population growth factored in, police statistics show a decrease in both violent crime and property crime in the last year, as well as a 1 per cent drop in the overall crime rate.

Milton continues to have the highest crime rate in the region, but Chief Algar blamed that largely on the impact of the Maplehurst facility.

Last year, Milton generated about 2,700 police calls — but about 450 of those involved the local jail.

Wednesday's meeting was organized as part of the police service's process to create a business plan for 2004 to 2006.

Don Robinson, chair of the police services board,

said the force wants public input into its plan.

"There's a balance we have to strike," he said. "The board has a responsibility under the Police Services Act to govern, but we also have a responsibility to the taxpayers to do it economically."

Minimal turnout

The session attracted only a handful of members of the public, who suggested the service needs to make officers more effective to keep costs down, as well as improve the communication and marketing of its programs.

Anyone interested in submitting comments about how the police service should be improved, or areas on which it should concentrate, is invited to send them via e-mail to jackie.gordon@hrps.on.ca.

The board's new business plan is due to be completed this fall.

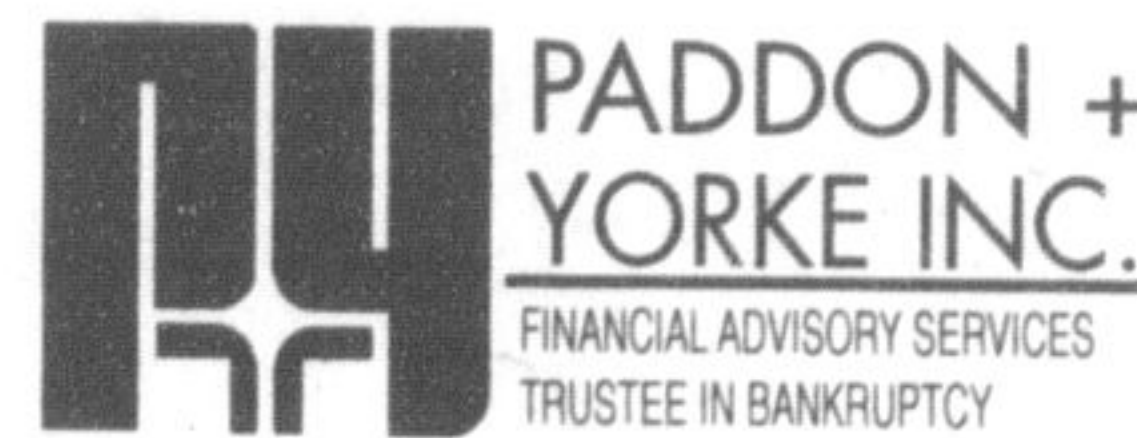
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Library holding its writing contest again

The Milton Public Library is inviting budding young writers and poets to enter its second annual Take Flight and Write contest.

The contest — open to students from grades 7 to 12 — offers the chance to submit one or two short stories and three poems for judging, with the winners receiving cash prizes.

The deadline for entries is July 31.

Winners will be chosen in three age categories: Grades 7 and 8, 9 and 10, and 11 and 12. They'll receive prizes and read their work at an awards ceremony in the fall.

Winning entries will also be published on the library's teen Web page.

Entry forms can be picked up at Milton Public Library, or downloaded off the library's teen Web page at www.mpl.on.ca/teenpage.htm.

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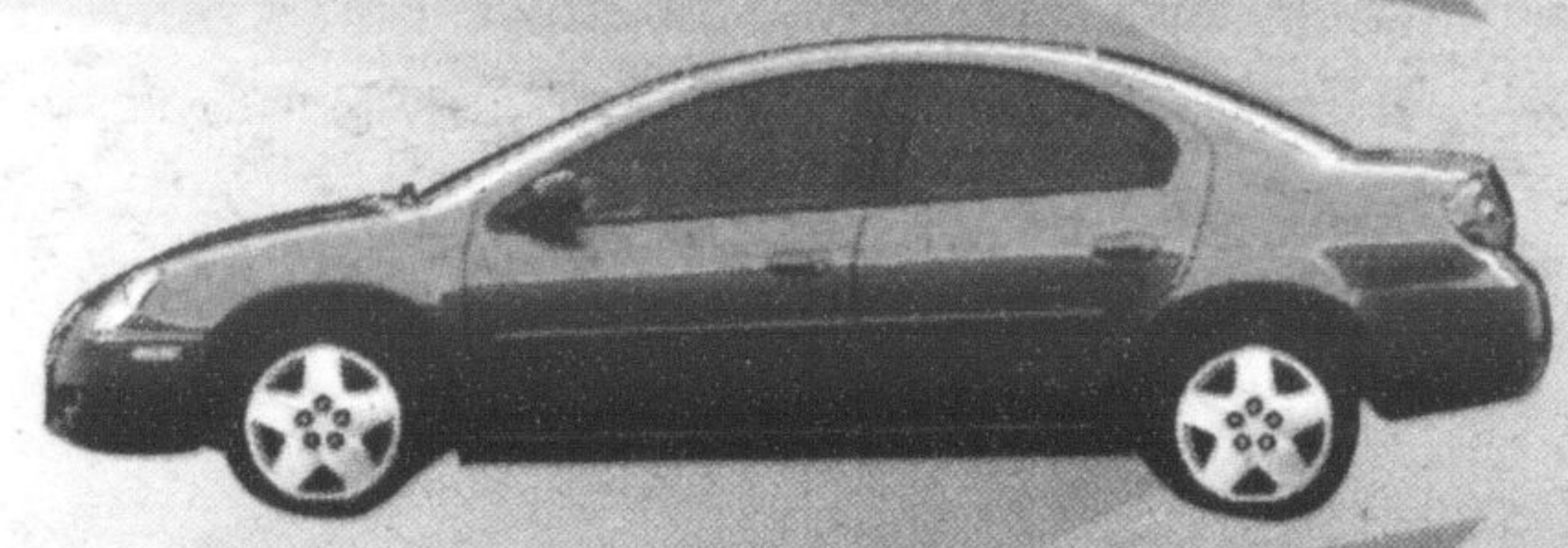
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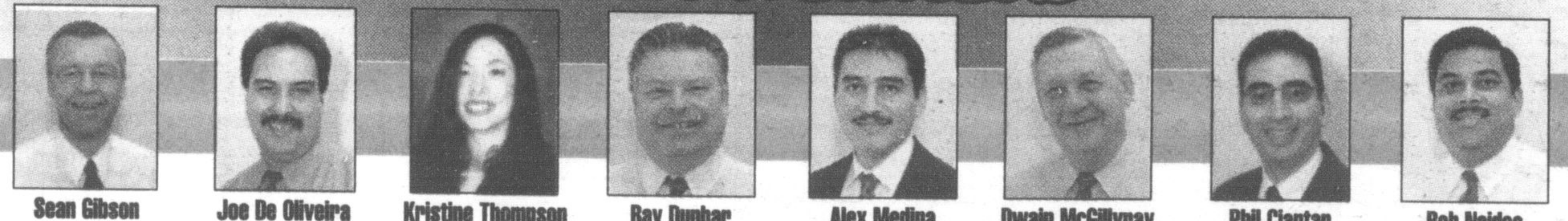
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