

Inquest underway

An inquest into the death of a man who died two years ago at Milton District Hospital while in custody began yesterday.

Paramjeet Singh Padda, 39, died while under the custody of Maplehurst Correctional Complex. Under the Coroners Act, an inquest is mandatory when a person dies while in custody.

The inquest is expected to last four to six weeks and is being held at the Ramada Inn, 161 Chisholm Dr.

Stokes was high, scared: aunt

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

When confessed murderer Douglas Stokes called his aunt to pick him up after a fatal encounter with Milton resident Murray Parrott more than two years ago, he was high on drugs, hallucinating and scared, his aunt testified Friday.

"He was very upset, saying, 'That man

has a family' and crying. I recall him being afraid, just wanting to get (away)," Carol Watson, of Georgetown, told Judge Bruce Dumo at Superior Court of Justice in Milton. "Throughout the drive, I remember him telling me about a man who attacked him with a knife."

The nightmare began at about 4 or 5 a.m. for Ms Watson, she testified, when 19-

year-old Mr. Stokes called her and asked her to pick him up in front of the Carriage Square donut shop on Main Street.

He was working as a roofer in Milton, she said, and it wasn't unusual for her to pick him up from work.

This was no ordinary night, however.

Later that morning, Aug. 31, 2001, Mr. Parrott's body was found behind the Milton Curling Club on Millside Drive by a man walking his dog. Mr. Parrott had knife wounds to his chest and neck.

Mr. Stokes pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of Mr. Parrott, 53, in September and was in court Friday for a sentencing hearing.

After Ms Watson located Mr. Stokes, she said she drove her obviously-high nephew to St. Catharines, thinking his father would know better what to do with him.

"He was freaked, and rambling a lot," she told the court. "He looked horrible. He was shivering and his teeth were chattering. Throughout the drive, I got that he had coke and ecstasy and crack and that he was smoking weed."

She said she couldn't distinguish what happened with Mr. Parrott from Mr. Stokes' hallucinations.

She gave him a pair of clean pants, which he changed into at a Campbellville service centre, and said she assumed Mr. Parrott's knife, with which he was stabbed, went in a plastic bag with the dirty pants.

Later that day, she said, Mr. Stokes' family called police and he was arrested.

Much of the cross examination by Crown attorney Laurie Jago centred around how lucid Mr. Stokes was during the drive and if he really was, as his aunt testified, hallucinating and completely irrational.

She pointed out he was able to tell his aunt on the phone exactly where to pick him up and just how much of each drug he had consumed.

Ms Jago then suggested the pants turned over to the police weren't the pants Mr. Stokes put in the plastic bag.

"If you didn't see any blood, why did you tell him to put them in a bag? I'm going to suggest it was because they were bloody pants and you needed to contain them so they wouldn't damage the truck and they weren't the ones that were turned over to police."

As the handcuffed Mr. Stokes left the courtroom, he smiled slightly at his parents and Ms Watson. His mom and aunt held up their hands, palms straight, middle and ring fingers bent — a silent I love you.

The hearing continues later this month.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Man hurt in crash

A Mississauga man is in hospital with life-threatening injuries after his car hit a wall and flipped over early Sunday morning on Ninth Line, south of Derry Road.

The 18-year-old man was driving a 1997 Nissan southbound at 4:30 a.m. when his car crossed the centre line and drove into a west side ditch before colliding with a culvert retaining wall, flipping the car on its side.

The man was trapped, semi-conscious, for about 20 minutes before a passing motorist called police. Police said alcohol wasn't a factor.

Halton Regional Police are looking at weather conditions and wildlife as possible causes of the accident.

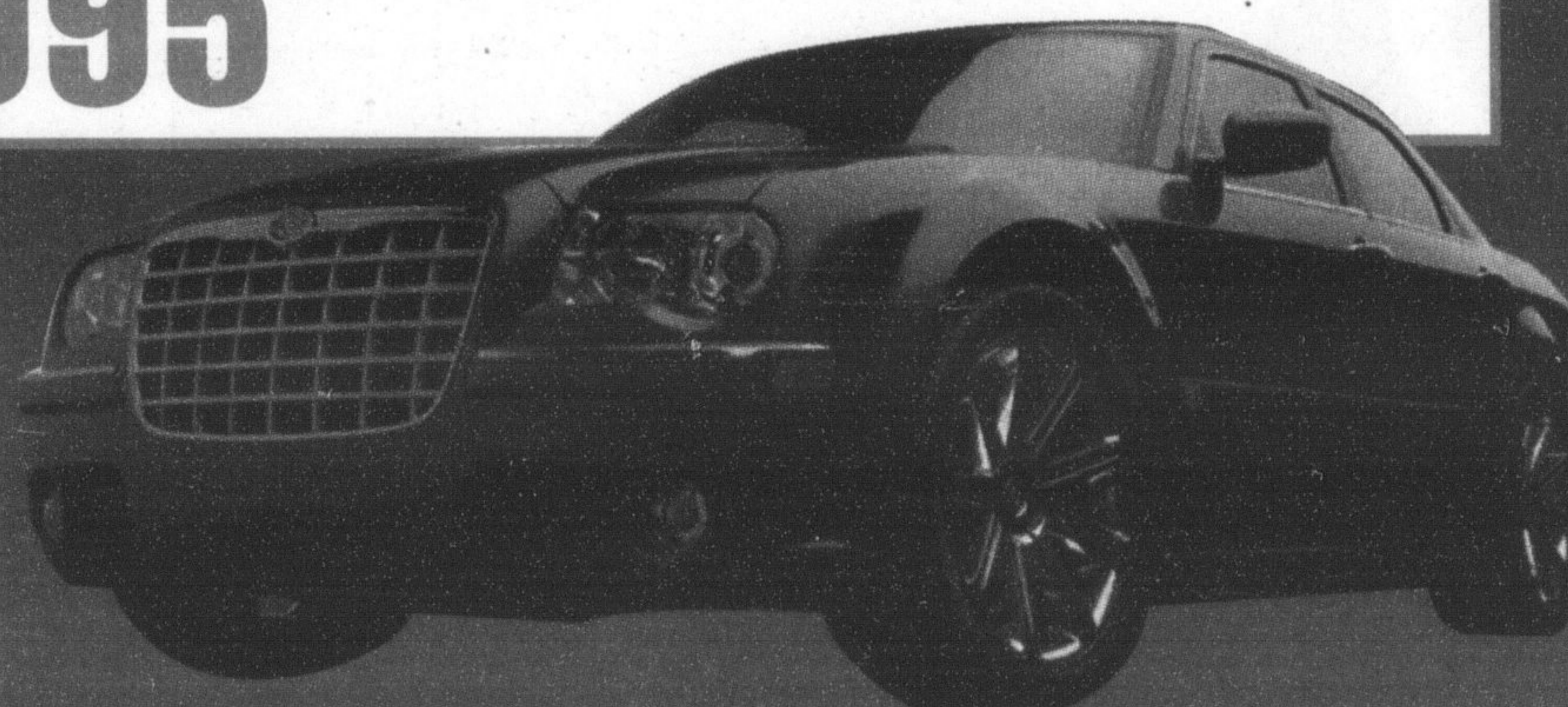
Witnesses are asked to call Det. Const. Paul Davies at (905) 825-4747, ext. 5202.

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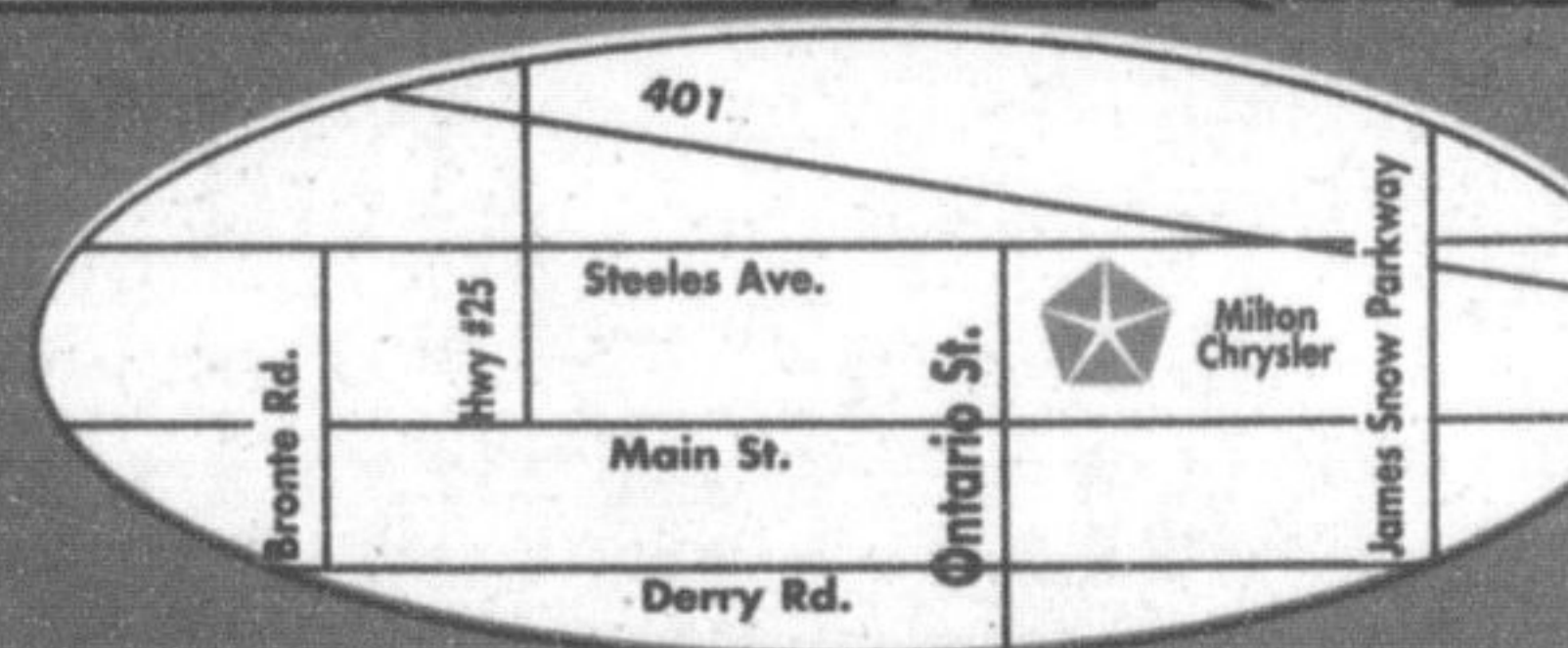


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