

# Injuries fourth leading cause of death in Halton

By JASON MISNER

The Champion

A regional health department study has concluded injuries are the fourth leading cause of death among Halton residents behind only cardiovascular, cancer and respiratory disease. It mirrors the provincial trend.

The 122-page study, tabled at the Region's health and social services committee meeting last Tuesday, found 535 Halton residents, all ages, died from an injury sustained between 1995 and 1999.

Among males, the number one cause of injury-related death was suicide, with 96. It was followed by 75 fall-related deaths and 71 vehicular deaths.

Among females, the number one cause of injury-related death was related to falls, with 111 deaths. It was followed by 34 vehicular deaths and 33 suicide deaths.

The statistics were gleaned from hospital databases and included Halton residents injured at home or at work, or injured elsewhere in the province. The last report of its kind in Halton was released in 1996 and looked at injuries between 1989 and 1993.

Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of health and health department commissioner, said the most recent report wasn't meant to provide a detailed analysis of the deaths but to identify areas of con-

cern.

The key is to use the data to help health staff concentrate on where programs need to be enhanced or further evaluated, he said, noting a host of programs exist that attempt to address various issues and needs. "We need surveillance data to have a handle on what is going on in the community to know where we need to target our programs," he said. "There isn't that one magic bullet that can solve (the problems)."

For more information about programs, call the Region at (905) 825-6000.

In regard to suicide deaths among Halton males — they are well below the provincial average — Dr. Nosal said regional council has recognized the importance in addressing mental health issues.

For example, in this year's budget, a mental health staff person has been authorized for hire to deal with mental health issues in grades 6, 7 and 8 students.

It's still being determined whether that person will monitor kids in Oakville schools or in north Halton. A similar position has been in effect in Burlington for a year.

As for falls among females, Dr. Nosal said there are a number of causes, but the bottom line is that "Ninety per cent of injuries are predictable and preventable."

The study also looked at trends in

hospitalizations and in emergency room visits due to injuries.

It found there were 13,669 hospital admissions between 1997 and 2001, resulting in \$82 million in acute care hospital costs.

Injuries were responsible for 39,907 visits to the emergency room in 2001, of which males made up nearly two-thirds of the visits. The main reasons for ER trips were due to sprains, strains, fractures and open wound injuries.

Specifically, the study found ER visits in Milton were twice as high as those in Oakville.

This statistic perked the ears of Wards 2 and 4 Regional Councillor Ron Furik.

"I would guess, maybe, it's because we don't have a (24-hour) walk-in clinic," he said in an interview, noting Dr. Nosal will get him the information about the ER visits rate. "I'm curious."

As for accidents involving Milton and Halton Hills males, where the number of hospitalizations was higher than the provincial average between 1997 and 2001, he would also like to know more about this.

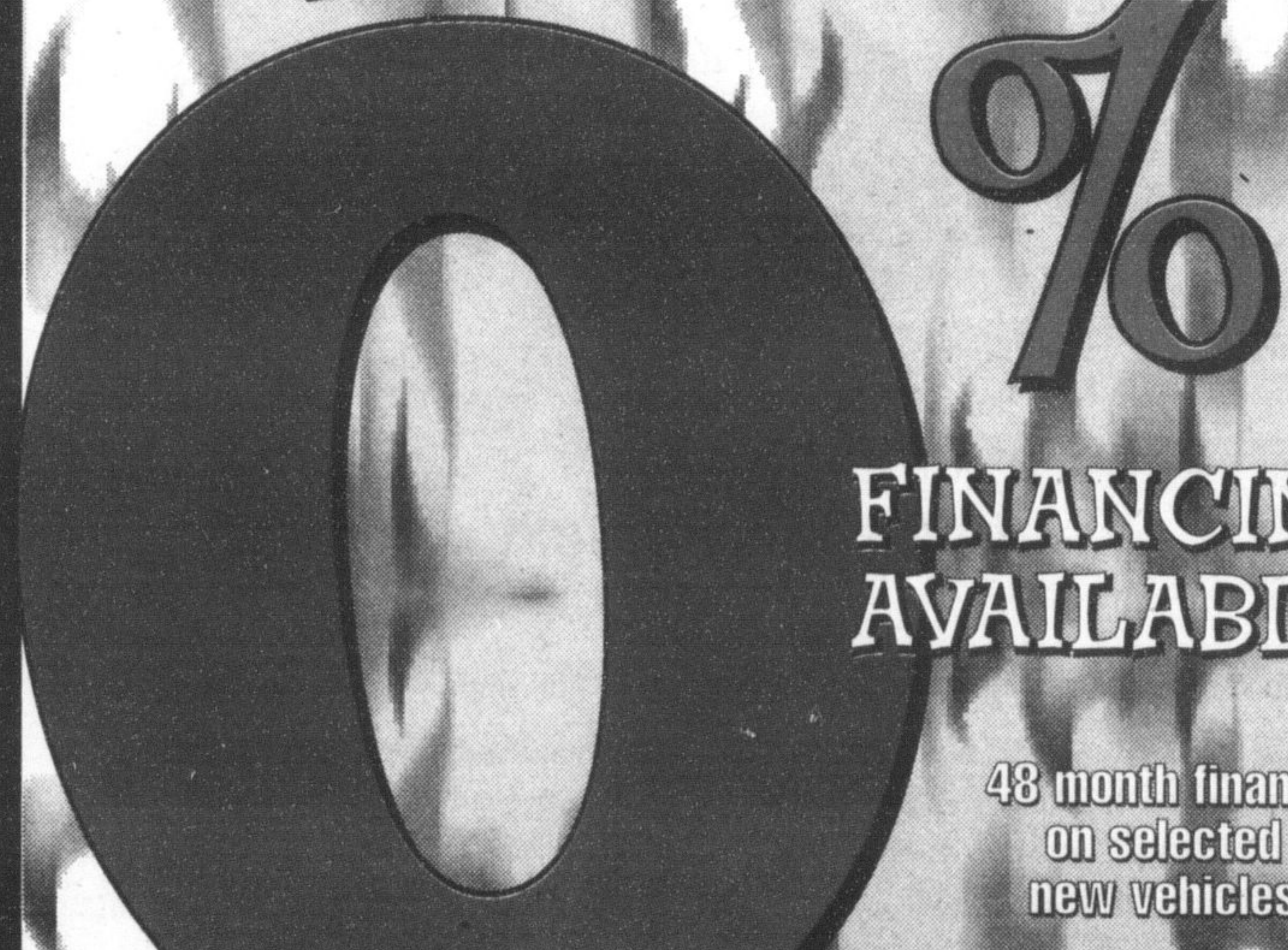
Injuries cost the Canadian health-care system more than \$4.2 billion a year, the health report noted.

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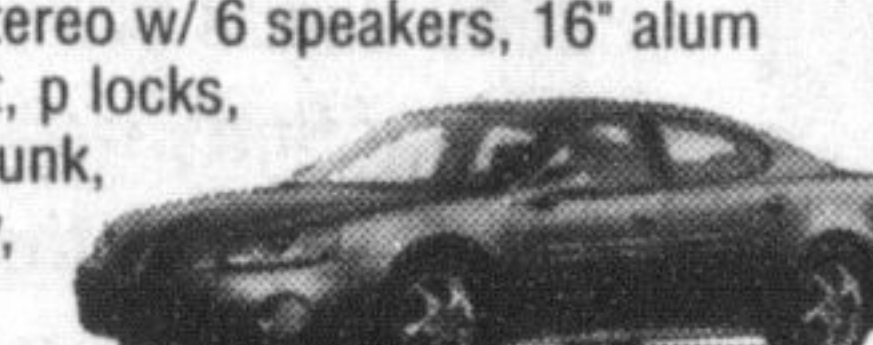
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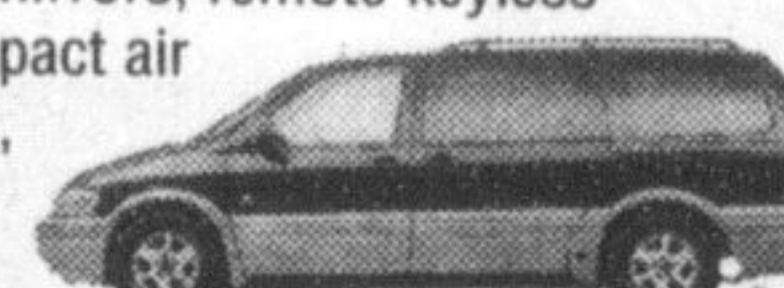
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