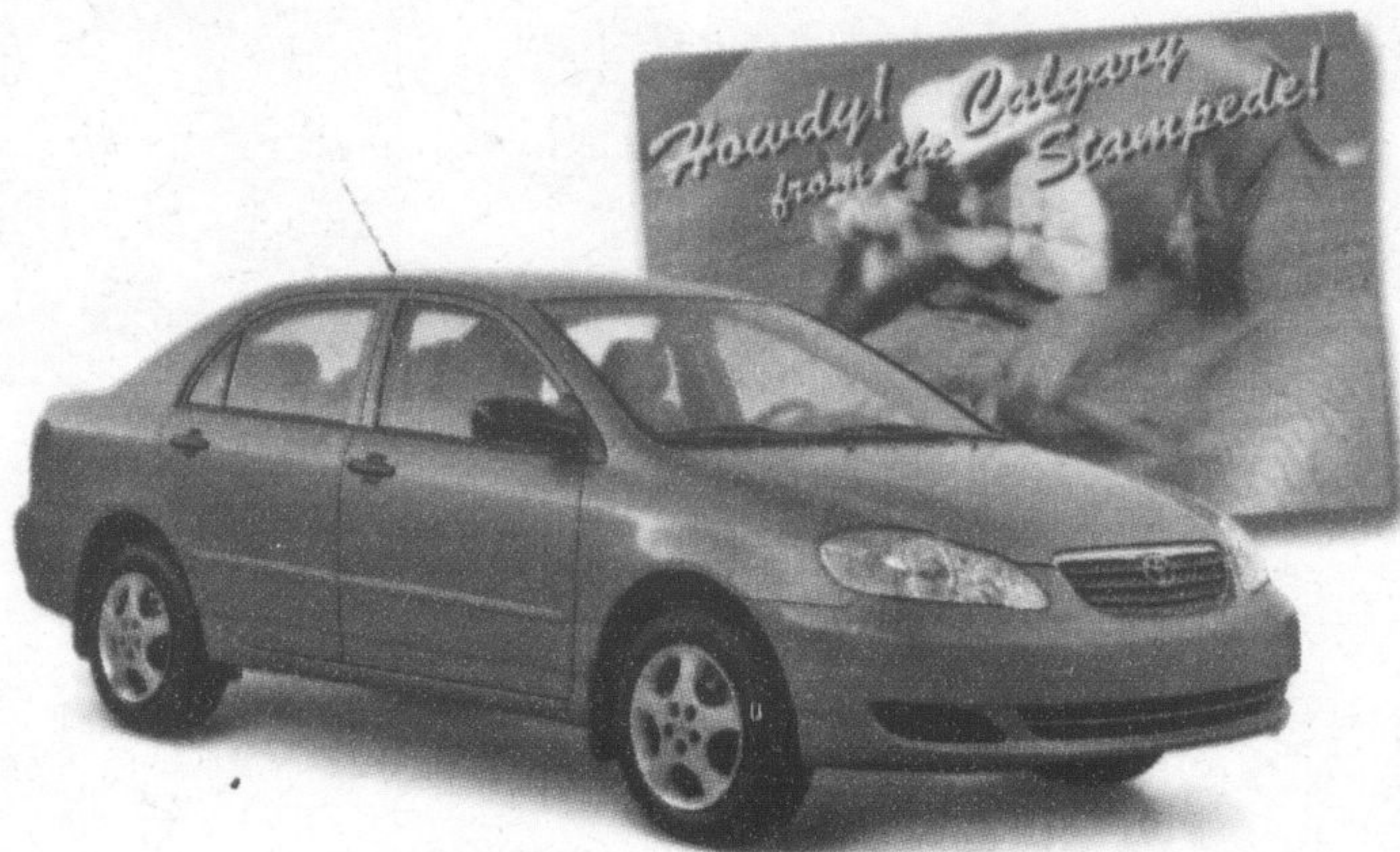


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# Crime is down, chief tells council

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

Halton residents can be proud that the region has one of the lowest crime rates in Canada. Not only that, crime is down to its lowest level in more than three decades as of last year.



Ean Algar

That's due not just to the dedication of the police service, but also to the support of the community, said Halton Regional Police Chief Ean Algar in a presentation to regional council July 13.

"Ours (crime rate) puts us as one of the safest communities in Canada," Chief Algar told The Champion. "But even with the low crime rate, we continue to see it getting lower. And that's continuing this year."

In the first five months of 2005, there was a 4 per cent drop in criminal offences compared with the same time last year.

Chief Algar added the drop in crime rate is particularly impressive given the population growths in Milton, Halton Hills, Oakville and Burlington.

There are a number of things that lower crime rates can be attributed to, he said in an interview with The Champion.

Partnerships between the police service and the community are to thank, as well as the various social agencies. Also contributing are the high employment rates and education levels and a general sense of well-being in the community.

"This is a nice area to police in," Chief Algar said.

Of course, there's always room for improvement.

"Any victim is one too many. We'd like to see a crime-free society, but is that a reality? I suspect not," he said.

Other positive facts Chief Algar presented to council included that as of 2004, the total motor vehicle collisions were down 3.1 per cent and fatal collisions were down 45 per cent.

But it's not all good news. Both counterfeiting and grow operations are increasing dramatically in Halton — and everywhere — as well as identity theft, Chief Algar said.

From 2002 to last month, Halton Regional Police seized \$17.5 million in grow house plants.

The issue with grow houses, he said, is there's so much profit to be made and there aren't sufficient deterrents.

"It's a phenomenon that's beginning to spread across Ontario."

As for counterfeit money, there was a 149 per cent increase in the number of recorded offences from 2002 to 2004. That's largely because of the technological advances that have improved the counterfeit currency, Chief Algar told council.

Also, violent crimes in Halton — mostly assaults — are up 9.6 per cent for the first five months of this year with 790 incidents, compared with the same period last year when there were only 721.

And Maplehurst Correctional Complex is seeing increased criminal activity. There

• see RISE on page A8

