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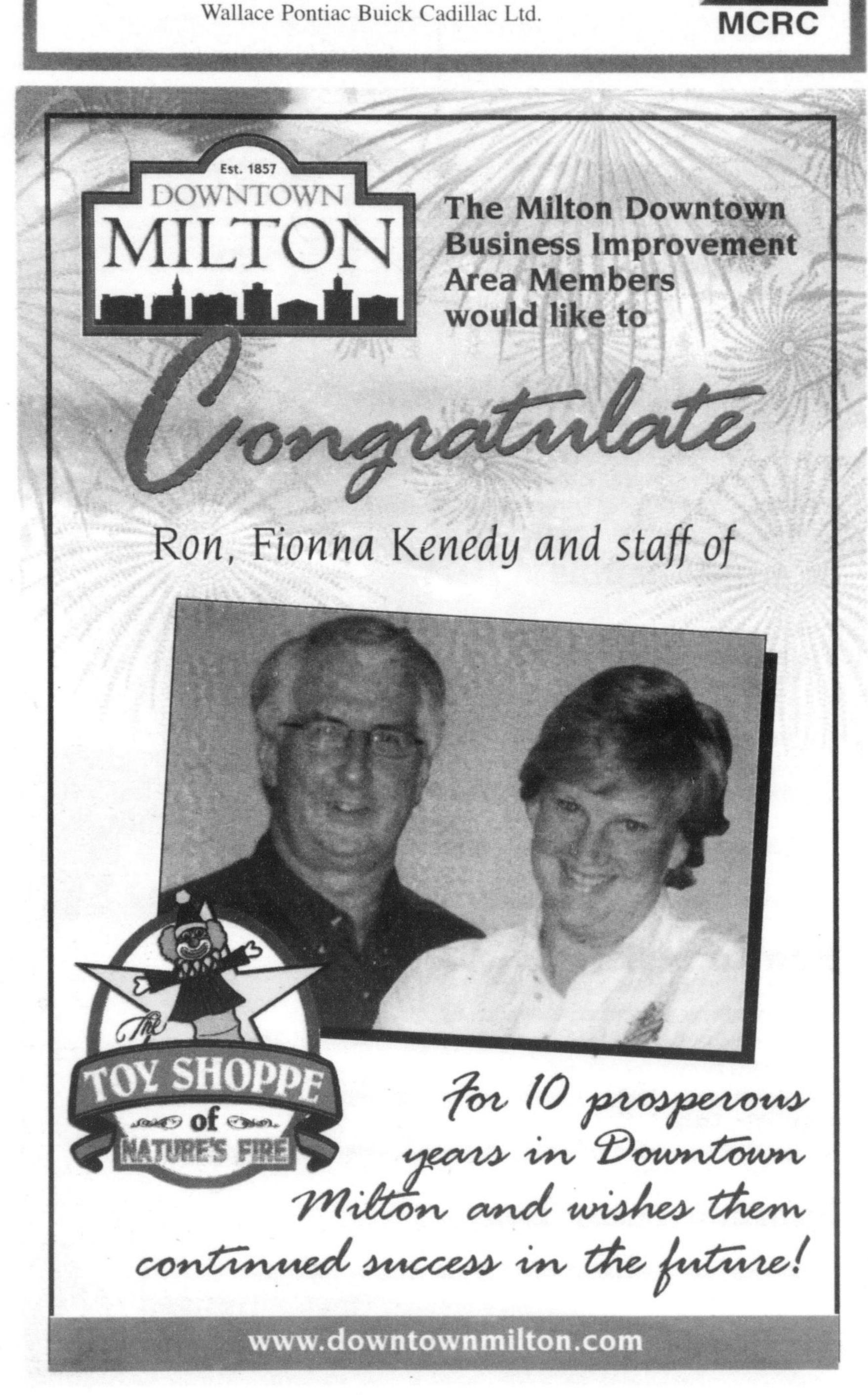
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Rebuilding Mavs narrow gap on unbeaten Oakville

By Steve LeBlanc CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The Mavericks' 11-4 loss in Oakville Sunday afternoon probably isn't anything to get too excited about.

However, in a season that's more about progress than prosperity, it's tough not to be at least a little encouraged about the returning juniors' marked improvement over their previous visit to Maplegrove Arena.

Staying within single digits of the still unbeaten Buzz was no doubt a surprise to many at the Hive — or at least those who'd witnessed the 20-2 cakewalk their South East Division-leading hosts enjoyed just three weeks earlier.

A fortified defensive effort and a little more commitment to tracking down loose balls allowed Milton to keep things respectable this time around.

A standout in the Mavericks' lone victory to date, Paul Ryan tallied twice against the Buzz establishing a short-lived lead seven minutes into the game and closing out the scoring midway through the third period.

Chipping in singles were Mike Holmes and Shane Scott.

Two nights earlier at John Tonelli Sports Centre, Milton held its own over the final two

periods against the still struggling Halton Hills Bulldogs.

But five goals against in just over three minutes in the opening frame essentially wiped out any chance for a suspenseful evening, as the visitors cruised to a 10-2 decision.

Richie Fuoco was fairly steady overall between the pipes — keeping the floodgates from

bursting open after a somewhat shaky start — but received no offensive support.

Surprisingly enough, Mavericks' two goals both came while they were shorthanded. Scott and Ryan Lecky — one of four hometown players on this year's team — dented the twine, while assisting on both deposits was Matt

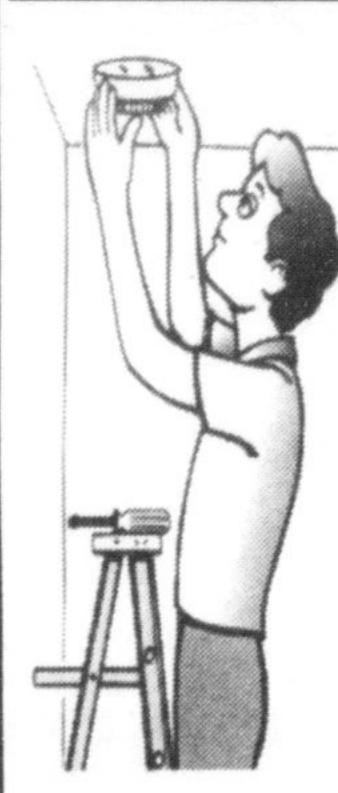
Just one goal was scored in the third period, and the North Halton rivals completed round two of their three-game regular season series in a lightning-quick hour and 40 minutes.

The Mavericks enjoyed another decent crowd last Friday of roughly 250 spectators — which has been about the average attendance so far this season, and is significantly up from the team's last goaround in 2004.

Milton was back in action last night against the host Green Gaels, and wrap up their four-game season series with Oakville tonight at Tonelli. Game time is 8 p.m.







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