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A & E

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Friday, June 13, 2008

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Man wanted in major pot bust

A Milton businessman is wanted by police in connection with the largest ever marijuana grow-op bust in Niagara Region's history.

A warrant is out for the arrest of Nicola Cortese, 44, by Niagara Regional Police Service on charges related to marijuana production and distribution.

On May 28, Niagara police concluded a six-month investigation into a large-scale marijuana growing operation with the raids of six locations in the region.

Seized was at least \$15 million worth of marijuana — plants in various stages of growth as well as "buds" — plus over \$500,000 of growing equipment. Also discovered was a loaded handgun.

Const. Jacque Forgeron, public relations officer with Niagara Regional

Police, confirmed that this is the largest such seizure in Niagara, and added she believes it's the third largest in Ontario.

Locations raided by police include a greenhouse, warehouse facilities, a residence and a former church building.

To date, eight men have been arrested in connection with the incident and charged with various offences, Niagara police said.

Cortese is also facing a handful of unrelated fraud charges laid by Halton police in connection with a series of alleged fraudulent loans and mortgages. He's scheduled to appear at Ontario Court of Justice in Milton next month on that matter.

Anyone with information about Cortese's whereabouts is asked to call Niagara police at (905) 688-4111, ext. 5300 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

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Cause of death still unknown

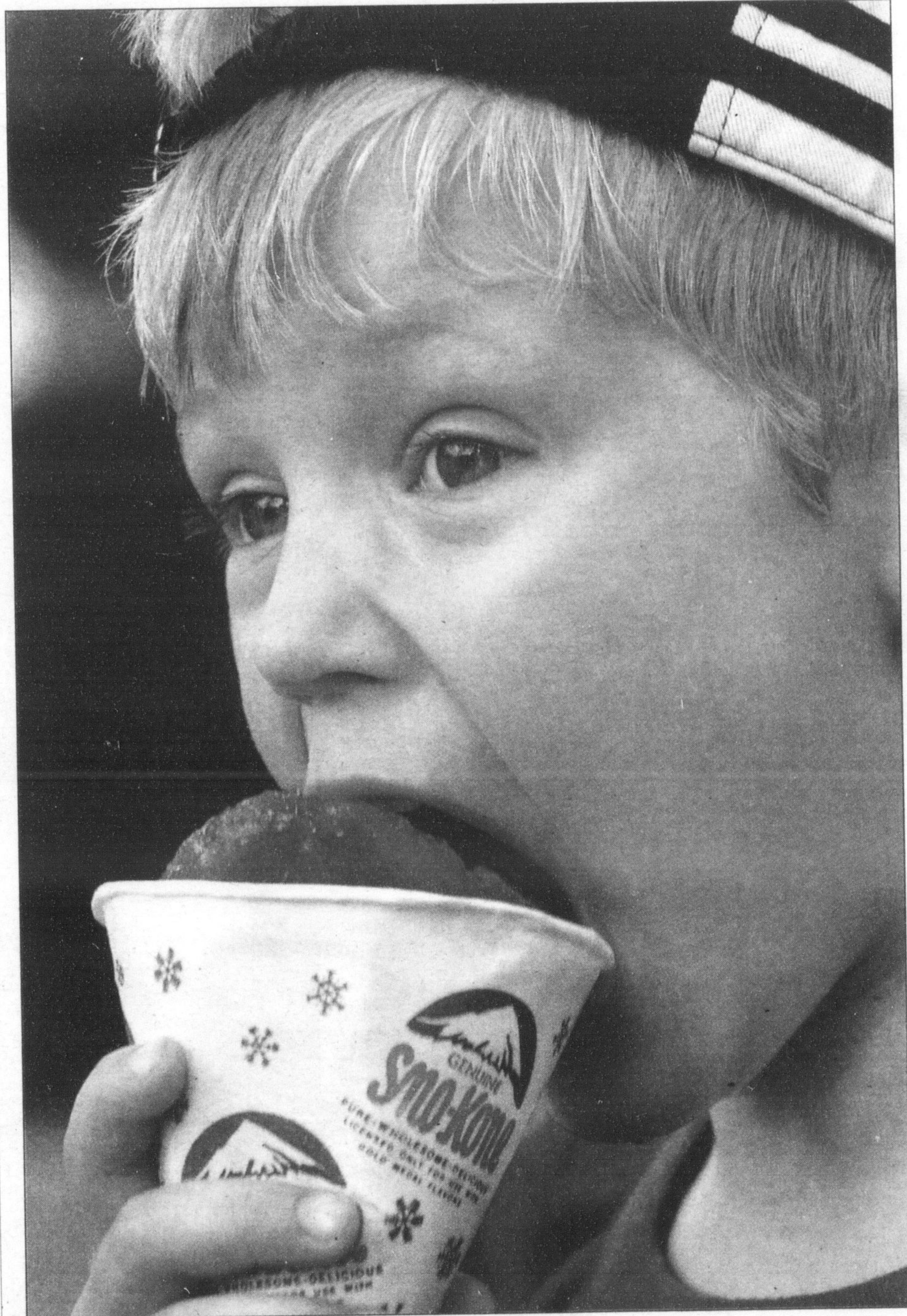
The cause of death of a 42-year-old man whose body was found on a Bronte Street front lawn Monday morning remains undetermined.

The body of Halton Hills resident Jamie Allen Gillies — formerly a long-time Miltonian — was discovered by passersby around 7 a.m. near Robert Street and pronounced dead shortly after.

An autopsy was performed Monday, but exactly what he died from is unknown at this point.

Foul play has been ruled out, police have said.

Further testing will be conducted at Toronto's Centre for Forensic Sciences.



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

COOL TREAT: Three-year-old Ben Baynton digs into his cool Sno-Kone in an effort to beat last weekend's heat as he takes in the Milton Community Resource Centre's 15th annual Family Fun Fair. For more photos of the event and the Downtown Milton Street Festival, see page B1.

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