Chudleigh says provincial budget 'almost a yawner'

• from REGIONAL on page 8

were no surprises in the document.

"People are beginning to develop a faith that we will do what we say," he said. "Even though economic indicators aren't screaming 'growth' there is a new confidence among people that things are getting better."

He added if recessions can be caused by people fearful of an " economic downturn, then the opposite must also be true.

Local government officials said they would have to delve into budget details for confirmation, but there appeared to be little which would impact municipalities.

The province did put \$60 million into improvements for provincial highways which it will soon turn over to local municipalities. Halton Region will likely take over responsibility for local sections of Highway 5, Highway 25 and Highway 7, according to Halton's director of corporate services, Joe Rinaldo.

Mr. Rinaldo said \$200 million to day care and an additional \$100 million to transit services could help Halton, but details were not known of the government's specific intentions for the money. Lowering employer health taxes and workers compensation premiums will not affect municipal governments but should help local business, Mr. Rinaldo said.

He added the land transfer tax refund should boost the local economy, with benefits to building trades and housewares retail-

As well, "indications from the budget suggest significant changes to local government, such as pooling business taxes for education and a province- wide reform of the property tax system," Mr. Rinaldo said.

Regional Chair Joyce Savoline said not everything that will shortly affect municipalities is in the budget, and there are other announcements expected soon, such as plans to divest the province of the highway network, which could profoundly affect local government.

"I hope their assessment of road standards is correct and we are

going to get roads that are in good repair," she said, adding that Highway 5 and Highway 25 are almost certain to become regional responsibilities, although there has not been confirmation of

"With the build-up to the budget from a taxpayers' point of view, I'm surprised how quiet reaction has been," she said.

While agreeing the rebate of land transfer taxes is a good incentive to home buyers, Ms Savoline was disappointed there were no incentives for building in the commercial and industrial sectors, which she described as "dead stopped." She said she hopes that § those incentives might come through changes to the Development Charges Act.

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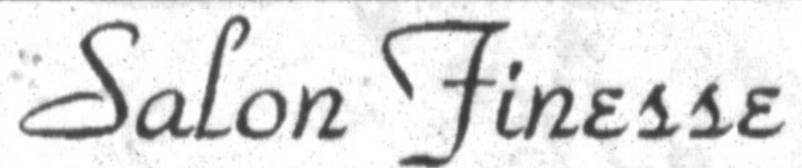
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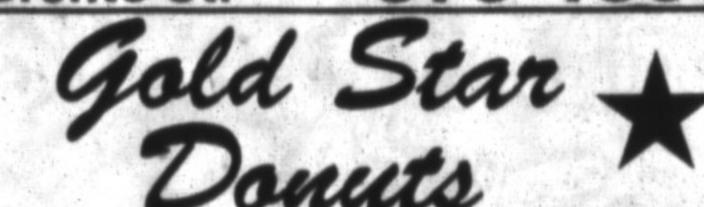
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