

# Auto show finishes with a flourish

BY BILL GAY

The North American International Auto Show closed its doors last Sunday, and while the numbers may not be all the organizers anticipated, most observers say it was a great showing for the industry.

Media from 62 countries came to the preview prior to the public showing.

Bob Thibodeau, NAIAS co-chair, said the public attendance figures increased every day. He and his committee are pushing for Cobo Centre to add additional space as the

show continues to grow. He suggests that this be accomplished by operating the venue by a regional authority.

NAIAS was a great show for Detroit's Big Three automakers.

GM received great attention for its Chevy Volt, an electric concept car that runs on both household electricity and gasoline. This car is considered to be four years away from the market, pending mass production of a suitable battery.

The number one automaker also received

media attention for the new Cadillac CTS with its interior improvements. The return of the Camaro to production is also widely anticipated by the automotive press.

This year's show could be labeled as the return of the mid-size car. Chrysler's entry in this field, the Dodge Avenger, will be assembled in Sterling Heights, which also turns out the new Chrysler Sebring, soon to include a convertible in its line-up.

Daimler Chrysler also announced the minivan segment it has dominated for

23 years will be bolstered by a new Dodge Caravan in 2008 featuring swiveling second row seats and a table. All told, the Caravan boasts 35 improvements for the new model that goes on sale this September.

Ford's concept car, the Interceptor, was one of the most talked about vehicles at the show. The Interceptor, a four-door coupe, is what Ford calls a celebration of the North American muscle car and the sporty elegance of 60's Ford sedans.

Ford is also introducing the Lincoln MKR concept,



Photo: George Bedford

Ford's concept car, the Interceptor, was one of the most talked about vehicles at the North American International Auto Show.

a premium four-door coupe that the CAW hopes will be assembled in Oakville. The MKR boasts 415 horsepower and 400 pounds of torque running on ethanol.

The NAIAS also featured the first full display by the Chinese auto industry, which could become a growing competitor in the future.

## Essex County Council Notes

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

### Fixing Puce Bridge

Council passed a recommendation from Chief Administrative Officer Brian Gregg to apply for provincial funding to repair the Puce Bridge on County Road 46 in Lakeshore.



Puce Bridge

The province has \$70 million to dish out under the Rural Infrastructure Investment Initiative, Gregg said. The estimated cost of repairs

for the bridge is \$541,000.

The condition of the bridge was reviewed a couple years ago when it was determined that it was in need of structural repairs, Gregg said.

The Rural Infrastructure Investment Initiative pro-

gram is available to construction-ready projects only.

Gregg said county administration also considered repairing the bridge over the Belle River near County Road 42 and County Road 27, but the Puce bridge was determined to be a higher priority.

### Council opposes provincial long-term care bill

Warden Nelson Santos said council would be supporting the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's

## Exchange student speaks at Rotary Club meeting

Rotary Exchange Student Evita Gonzalez, second from left, is seen here with her host sisters, Dana and Amy Bjorkman, and Virginia Hyland at the Rotary Club of Essex meeting on Monday, Jan. 15.

Evita gave an interesting slide presentation about her home city of Mérida, Mexico in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Evita is attending Essex District High School and has been staying with host parents, Brian and Rina Hyland and Stephan and Mary-Anne Bjorkman.

Anyone interested in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program can call 519-776-7723.



objections to the provincial Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006.

According to AMO's website, president Doug Reycraft is concerned that if passed, the bill would "create unprecedented liabilities for municipal governments and their councils...(creat-

ing) increased administrative burdens and standards that should be funded by the province."

The focus of the bill is to protect residents from abuse and neglect - standards Reycraft says are met and exceeded by municipalities, which subsidize the provin-

cial long-term care system through taxation by an annual net sum of \$270 million.

Santos echoed Reycraft's sentiments by saying the regulations that would be put into place would increase administrative costs and put pressures on the county.

He called the legislation "not appropriate," saying the county's long-term care facilities have already achieved the high level of care outlined in the bill.

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