

SPORTS: Stouffville granted OHF A tourney for April

Clippers to host Ontario midget championships

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Don Easter received welcome news recently.

As president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association and coach of the Stouffville Clippers midget A rep team, Easter was informed the Ontario Minor Hockey Association and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville had been chosen to host the 2010-11 Ontario Hockey Federation Midget A championships.

The event, which is slated to run from April 8 to 10 at the Stouffville Arena, will assemble the midget A champions from the OMHA, Greater Toronto Hockey League, the Alliance, Northern Ontario Minor Hockey Association and the host Clippers.

"We're obviously very pleased that the OMHA as the host branch for the 2011 Midget Championships accepted our bid to act as the host centre," Easter said Monday. "We received letters of support from the mayor's office and the chamber of commerce, which I'm sure went a long way to helping our proposal, but Stouffville's hockey legacy, the newly-renovated facility along with the strength of our program would have been factors as well."

For some of his players, who were part of a bantam team that won silver at the OHF championships three years ago, this will give them a chance to make amends.

'For the nine second-year midgets who played on the 2007-08 bantam team that lost to Temiskaming in the gold-medal game, it's a chance to complete some unfinished business.'

"This represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these young men to compete for a provincial championship in front of their hometown fans," Easter said. "For the nine second-year midgets who played on the 2007-08 bantam team that lost to Temiskaming in the gold-medal game, it's a chance to complete some unfinished business."

The last time an OHF Championship took place in Whitchurch-Stouffville was in 2001-02 when the Clippers peewees, under the direction of head coach Rick Sooley,

served as the host team.

Playing with a short bench due to injuries but urged on by a vocal home crowd, the Clippers captured the championship.

That was also the last time a Stouffville team skated off with an OHF title.

Since that championship, various Stouffville teams looked at the possibility of applying to host an OHF championship.

One team made a submission a few years ago, which turned out to be unsuccessful.

"There's a lot of work involved in preparing a bid and if you are successful it can be a pretty daunting task to organize an event of this kind," Easter said.

When the WSMHA board learned last spring it was the OMHA's turn to host the Midget A OHF championship, they agreed to submit a proposal to act as the host centre.

Easter said the decision was influenced by the fact the players who make up this year's Clippers midget team have enjoyed some competitive success in winning back-to-back OMHA titles as bantams and minor midgets and reaching the finals last season.

"The fact that the core parent

group had planned and organized a team trip to the Czech Republic a few years ago gave the board some confidence that we had the resources to ensure that the event itself would be a success. Both factors were highlighted in our proposal to the OMHA," Easter said.

They submitted a 15-page proposal to the OMHA at the end of August.

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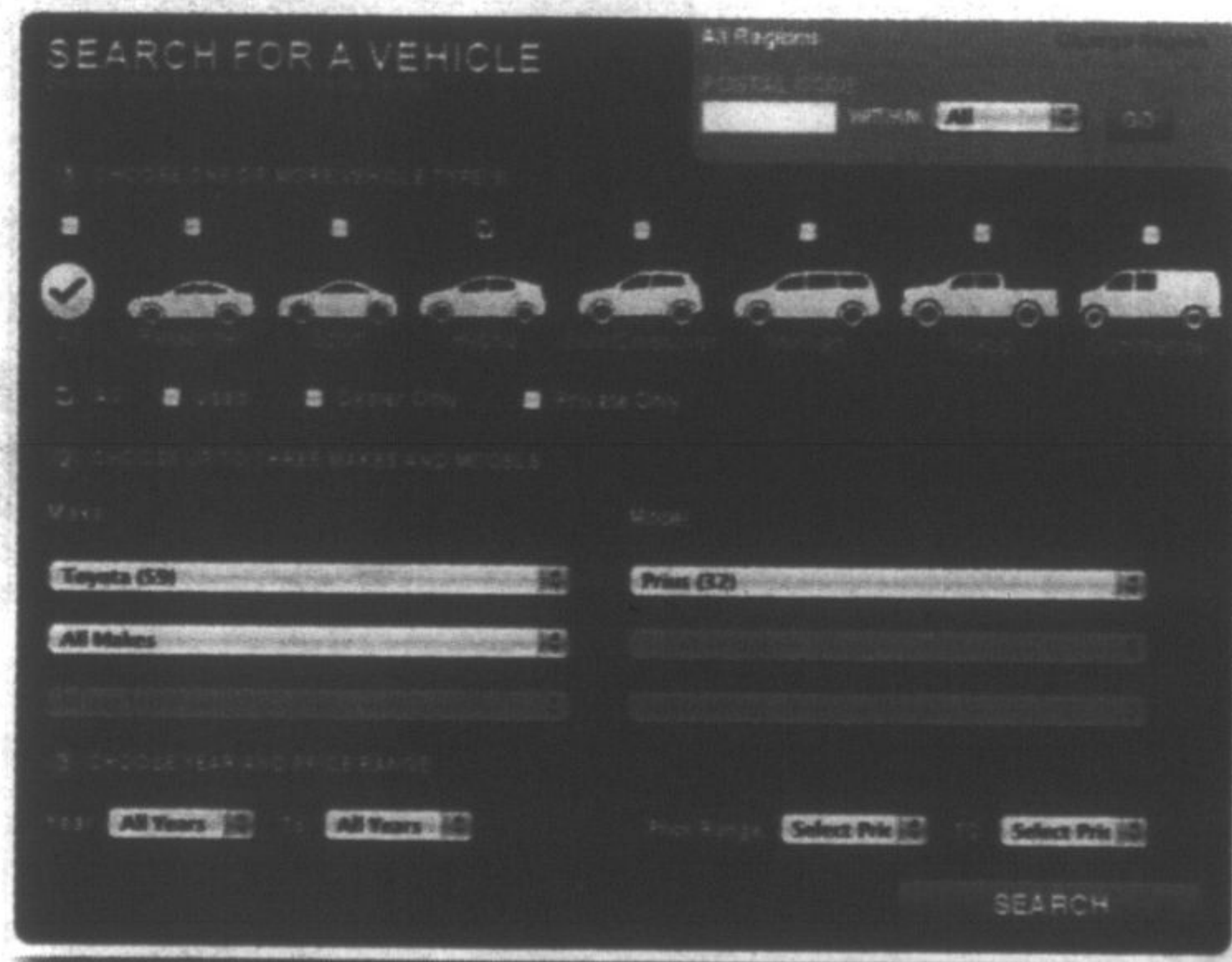
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