

More farms should be excluded from Greenbelt, Halton farmer says

Patchy development destroying agriculture in Halton

BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Harry Brander doesn't believe the best farmland exists anymore in Halton Region. He says the area's farms are "too fragmented," creating a disturbing patchwork of farmland that's no longer viable.

South of Georgetown, including an area where Harry farms, there's a large pocket of land that doesn't come under the Province's Greenbelt Draft Plan. Harry believes this land should remain outside of the Greenbelt because it's no longer viable agricultural land. And, he also believes that there are other farms, designated as part of the Greenbelt in Halton that should be excluded from the plan for the same reason.

"THEY ARE SAYING THEY WANT TO KEEP AGRICULTURE, BUT NOT AT THEIR EXPENSE"

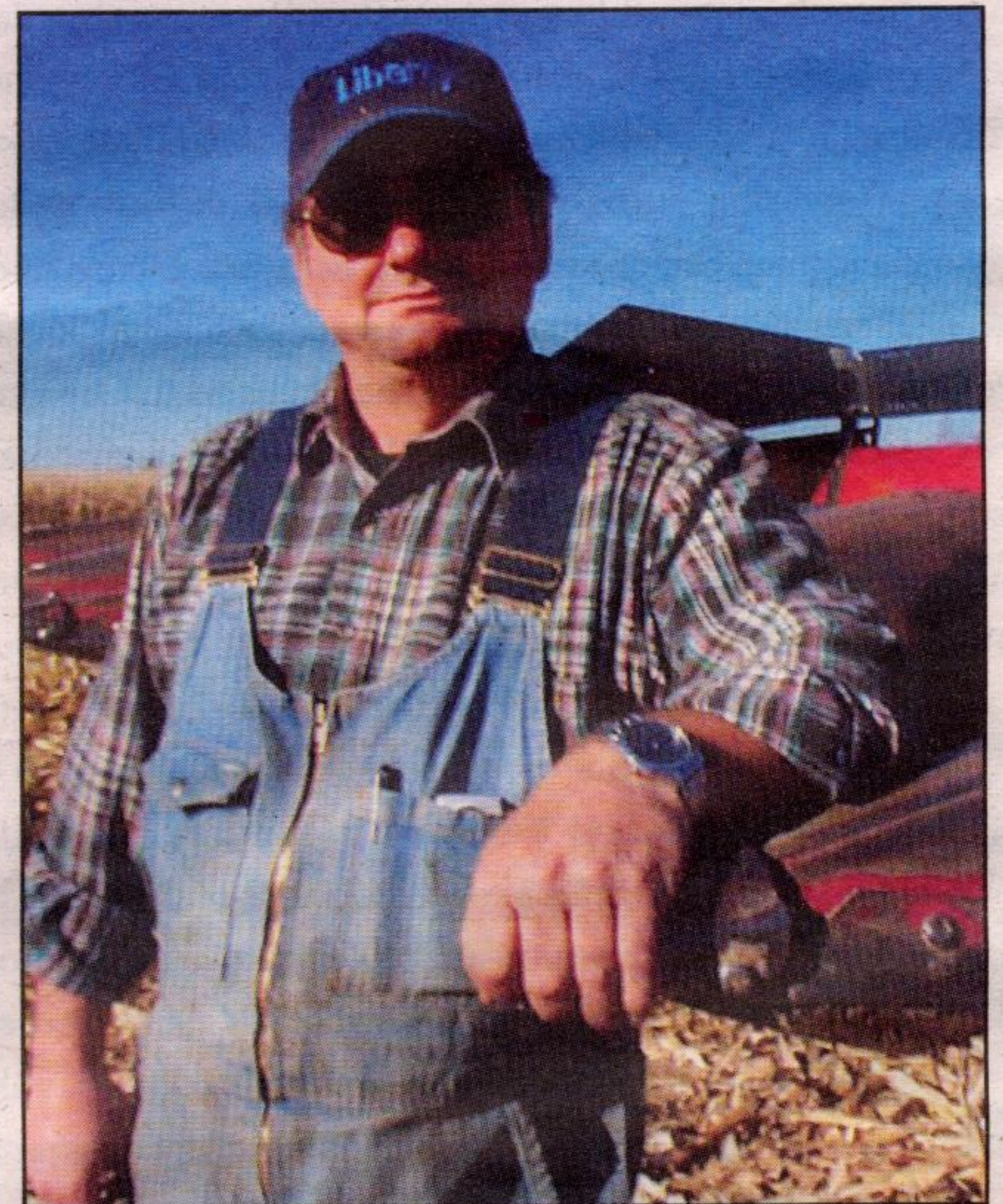
Agriculture is something that's dying out in Halton in part because of what he sees as a haphazard pattern of development. He says the "leapfrog" approach to development has created sections of farmland that exist apart from other agricultural areas. In his opinion, there isn't the farming infrastructure to support these areas or adequate long-term leases to make these viable farm operations.

"Leapfrogging is a mistake. It creates unsustainable pockets of agriculture that cannot survive. And there is a loss of infrastructure. There are no farm equipment places in this immediate area. I have to go outside the region."

Like many farmers, Harry is also concerned about compensation for those farmers that own land that may be designated as part of the Greenbelt. As the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's director for Halton Region, he's received many calls from farmers asking about compensation and he says there's a lot of frustration concerning this issue in the farm community.

Harry is discouraged about the draft plan as it exists now and he says there are "a lot of mixed messages" coming from the government. "They are saying they want to keep agriculture, but not at their expense."

The plan is one that the government suggests is good for all Ontarians, but Harry takes a different view. "If this plan is so good for all of society, then why doesn't all of society pay for it?"



Harry Brander, the director for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in Halton, says the "stress level is running very high in the agricultural community." The McGuinty government has not promised to compensate farmers for a drop in property values if their land is designated as part of the proposed greenbelt.

Nassagaweya Community Consultation Committee receive award

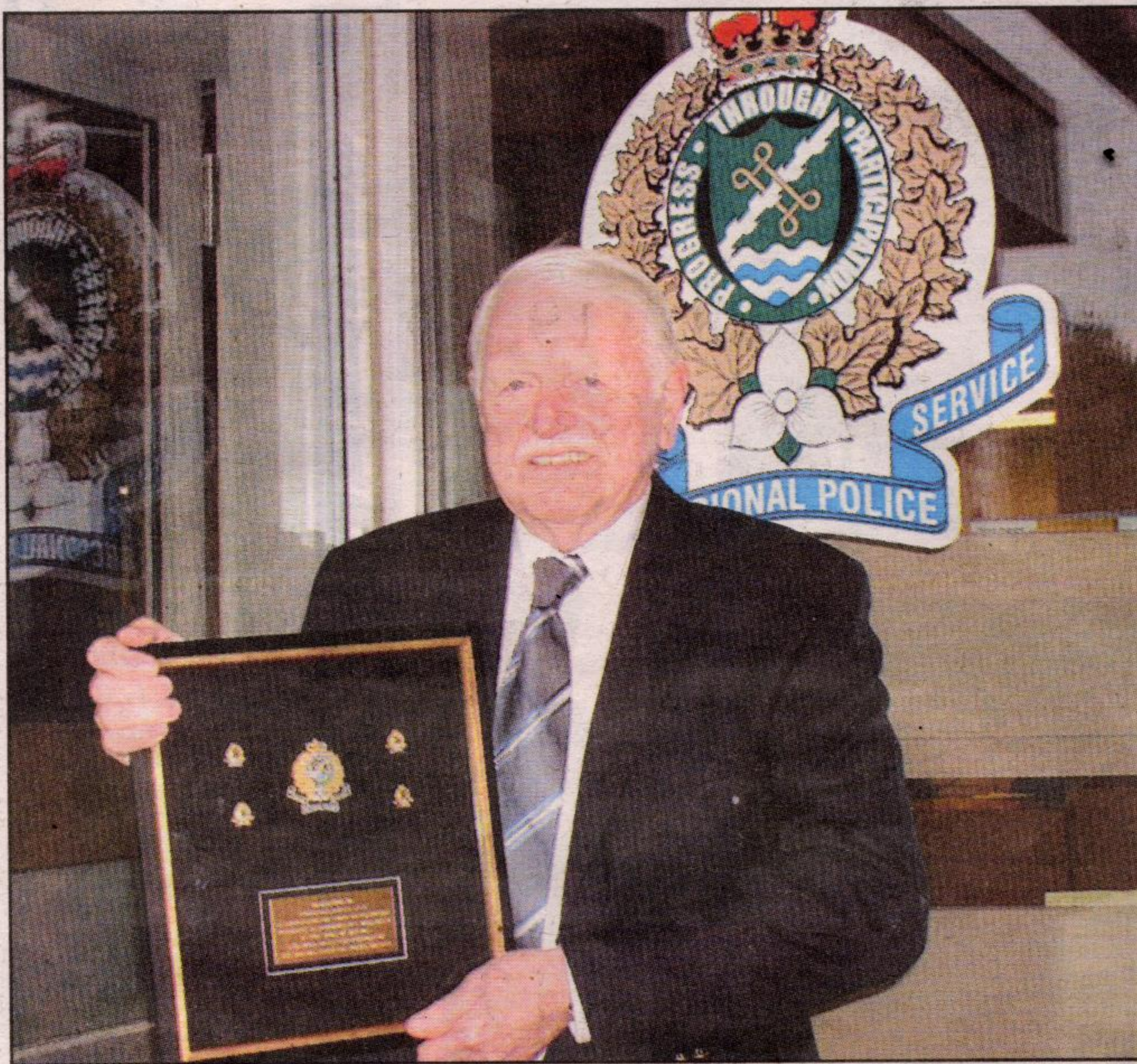


PHOTO BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Mike West, chairman of the Nassagaweya Community Consultation Committee (NCCC), proudly displays an award the NCCC received on November 8 during Crime Prevention Week. The NCCC, a group which works with police to identify community concerns to create a better and safer community, was honoured for its efforts to contribute to the safety and well being of Milton residents. The award also recognized the group's continuing support of Halton Regional Police.

Halton Hills Papers Parliament Hill Report

MICHAEL CHONG, M.P. FOR WELLINGTON-HALTON HILLS



Toward a Common Canadian Identity

Recent violence in Europe has shown that it has not integrated newcomers as well as we have in Canada and in the US. Yet, for all our successes, there are some troubling developments. The social cohesion that we've accepted as normal between different ethnic groups is breaking down. We see increasing friction, whether on university campuses, in talk show debates, or in wider Canadian society.

These are troubling trends because they have to do with how we view ourselves and each other; they are about identity. When a common Canadian identity is under threat, then so too is Canadian unity.

Too often we talk about that which makes us different from each other, and not about what we have in common. Canada is not simply the disjunction of different groups, different peoples, and different regions. To be a Canadian is also to share in common something with every other person in this vast land.

A couple of weeks ago, John Barber lamented in the *Globe and Mail* that few M.P.s of Chinese descent represented ridings where a large number of Chinese-Canadians live. I couldn't disagree with his premise more. I represent the riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, a riding over 97% Caucasian, and it elected an M.P. with the last name of Chong. Markham-Unionville, a riding over 60% Asian, elected an M.P. with the last name of McCallum. That's my idea of Canada.

My children are going to be of Chinese, Dutch, Scottish and English decent. To speak of these children in hyphenated terms is absurd. They will simply be Canadian.

We need to speak about a common Canadian identity and move beyond emphasising our differences. As Canada becomes increasingly racially mixed and diverse, we need to transcend the politics of ethnicity and start articulating our identity in pan-Canadian terms.