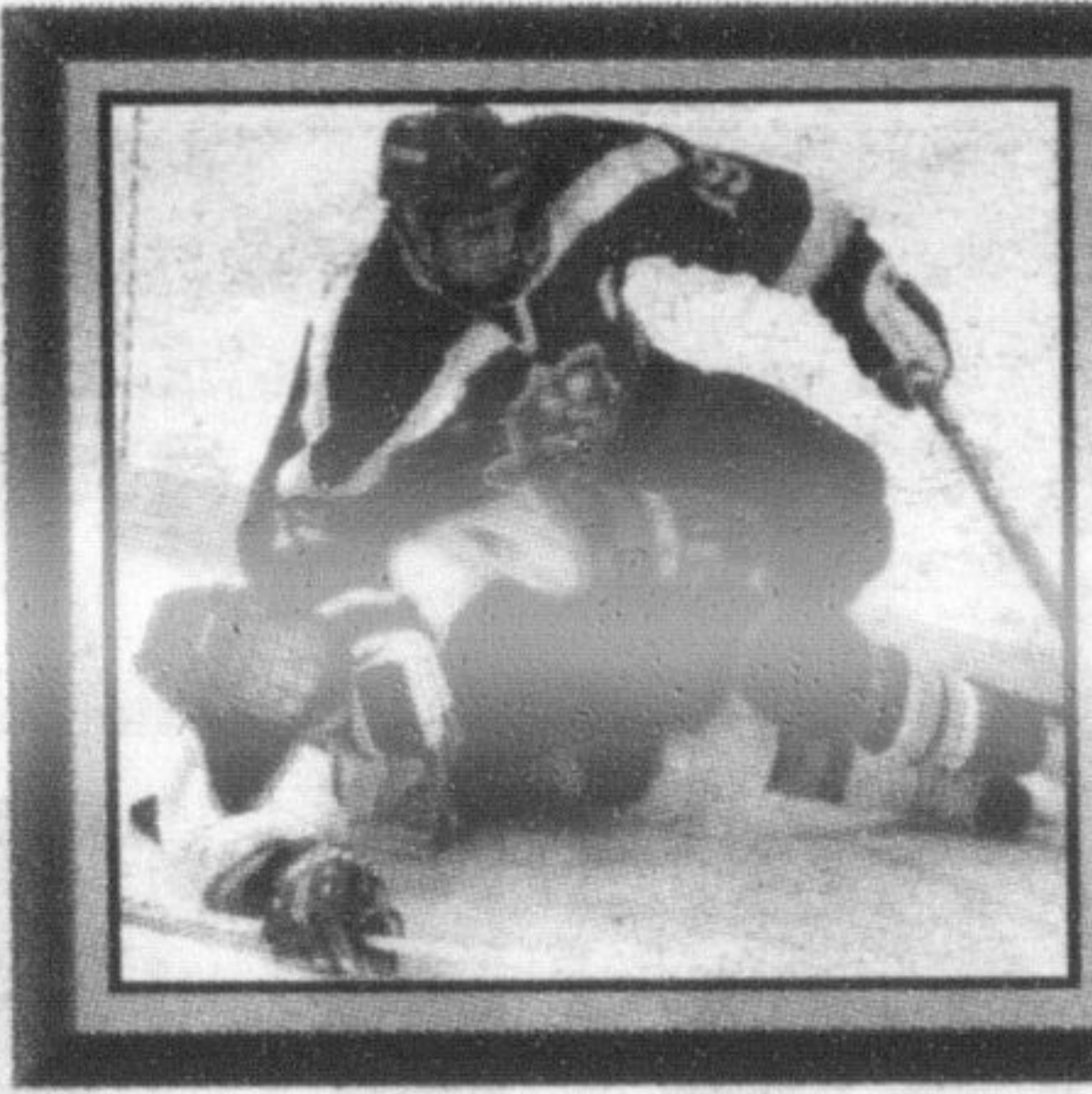


Man's dying wish comes true, thanks to co-worker
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Merchants square series with narrow victory
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Public meeting will address school board's funding woes
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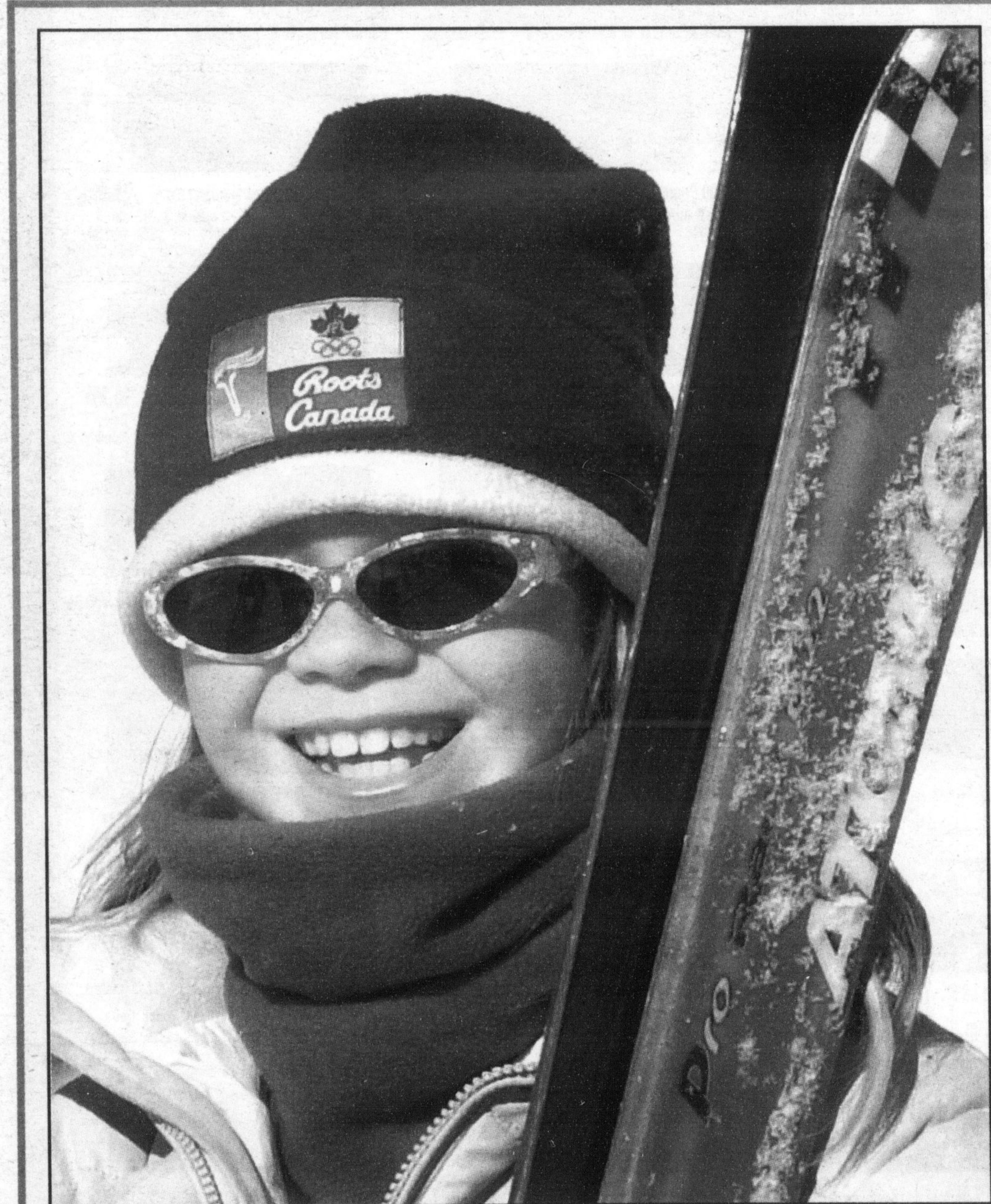


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

✓ Future Olympian

Nine-year-old Laura Hoff already has the look of an Olympic ski champion with a toque, glasses and a big smile, even though she's a beginner on the slopes. The young skier enjoyed the bright sunshine and great skiing Sunday morning at Glen Eden's bunny slope.

Two sides butt heads as smoking ban issue debated by committee

By RICHARD VIVIAN
The Champion

Smokers moved a step closer to the door last week when the Milton Smoking Bylaw Review Committee (SBRC) gathered for the first time.

"We met essentially just to hear the concerns (of local businesses) and to get people thinking about how we want to do this," said Councillor Rick Malboeuf, who represents town council on the committee.

"As far as I'm concerned, it comes down to the choice between 100 per cent smoke-free or designated smoking rooms. Are they (restaurant/bar owners) prepared to make that investment with the knowledge that two, three years from now, the Province could decide that designated smoking rooms don't work any more?"

Town council passed a motion last fall indicating its intention to implement 100 per cent smoke-free public places by May 31. The SBRC was established to mitigate that process and form a recommendation to town council regarding the strictness of the bylaw — expected to reach council March 25.

Committee members — which include representatives from restaurants and bars, Mohawk Raceway, Royal Canadian Legion, Milton Chamber of Commerce, Halton Region Health Department, Bingo Country and Town council — will meet again next week in an attempt to form a consensus opinion.

While the health department is re-enforcing its call for a complete ban on public butts, business and charitable interests want to take a closer look at designated smoking rooms.

"Having designated smoking rooms would be absolutely better for my busi-

ness," said Roger Mason, owner of The Dickens Restaurant, adding more than half his patrons smoke. "I think there's a happy balance that can be found here and designated smoking rooms sound like it is the best solution."

The Bingo Charities Association (BCA) agreed, saying a complete ban would seriously harm its ability to raise funds through its Bingo Country operations.

"All of our revenues are variable, but our costs are fixed. We work on a profit margin of about eight patrons on average. There's a very thin margin that we work on," explained Mike Shepherd of the BCA.

"It (complete smoking ban) could very well mean that the bingo hall would close."

But the health department insists at 100 per cent smoke-free is the way to go. That's the only way to protect not only other patrons, but business staff as well, said Julie Davis, environmental health specialist for the department.

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