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Halton farmers rallying to support Hay West campaign in country's drought-stricken areas

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**
The Champion

Local support is growing for the Hay West campaign to take hay to drought-stricken farmers in Alberta.

Upward of 3,000 round bails have been pledged from the Halton and Peel regions, each of which carries a value of about \$25.

"It's really blossomed in the space of about a week," said Norval United Church Minister Paul Ivany. The church is overseeing donations for both the Halton and Ontario federations of agriculture.

"If you talk to farmers, you'll see they're a bit of a conservative group, but they'll tell you it's been good for hay around here the last few years. There's a lot of farmers

with a lot of hay that they're willing to donate."

Once collected, the hay will be taken to Alberta via train and added to donations from other areas of the country. Donations are to be distributed through a lottery system, which has already seen more than 10,000 farmers apply and about 250 farmers take the hay home to their starving cat-

tle.

While the bulk of local donations have come from the Peel area, momentum is building in Halton, said Beth Laidlaw, who is taking pledges on behalf of the Halton Federation of Agriculture.

"Halton is just getting the ball rolling. Word is just getting out," she said, adding about 330 bails have been pledged from area farms.

"People are great. Even some people who are saying they can't give hay are saying they can help with loading or a number of different ways. The response has been really positive."

No timeline has been established for transporting the hay as of yet. It takes about 75 bails of hay to fill a rail car.

"It's all really happening so quickly. We're connecting with the rail people and the Hay West people to see when it might go out, but there's nothing definite yet," said Mr. Ivany.

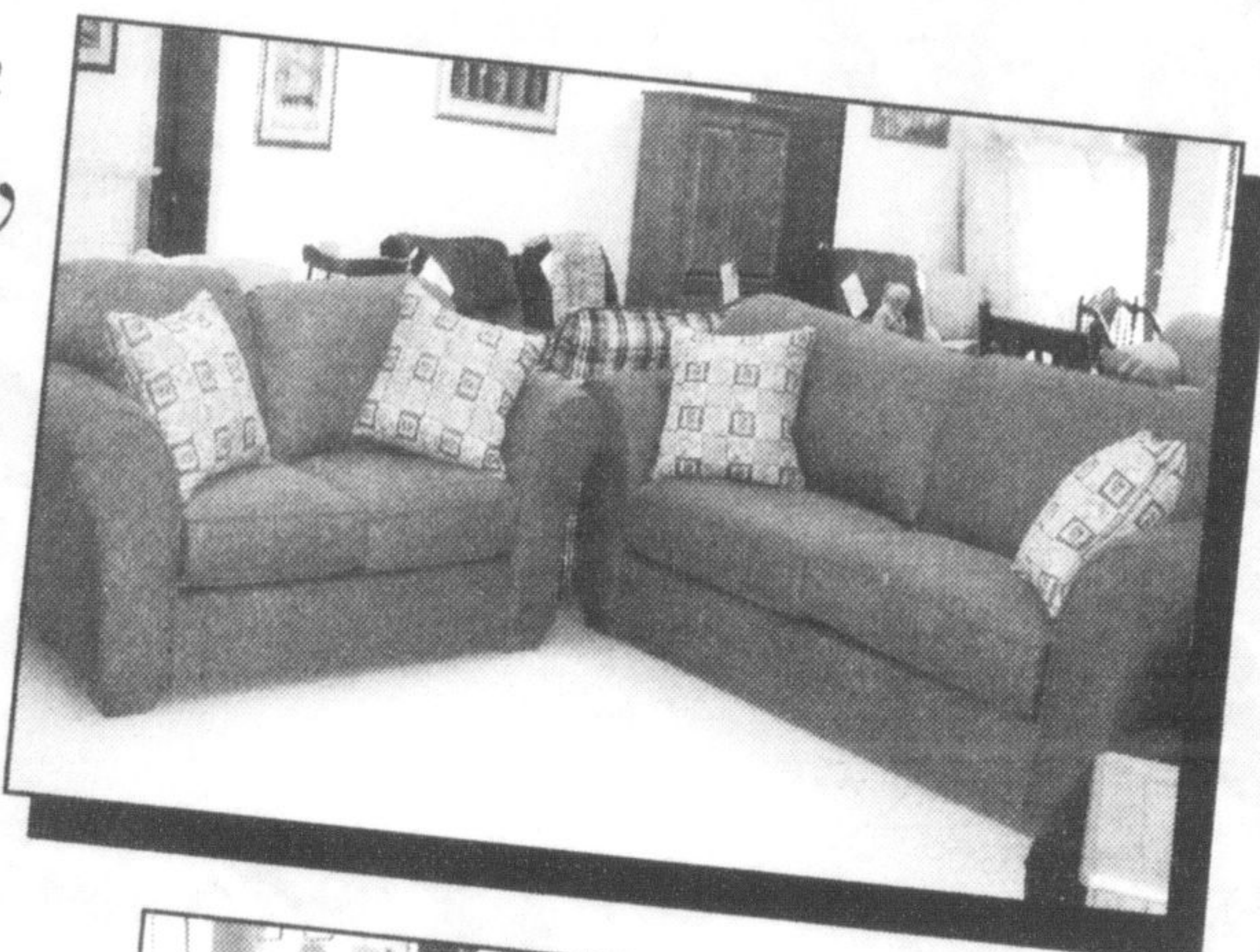
In addition to hay donations, the church is also seeking financial contributions. Any money collected will be used to either purchase more hay or cover transportation costs, the minister said.

Anyone looking to contribute hay should call Beth Laidlaw at (905) 455-8519. Cash donations will be accepted at Norval United Church. For more information, contact Mr. Ivany at (905) 877-6122.

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