

Police, Canadian Tire kick off Christmas toy collection

By **FANNIE SUNSHINE**
The Champion

The holidays can be a depressing time of year for those who can't afford to have presents under the tree.

But thanks to the Halton Regional Police's Toys for Tots program, Christmas might be more joyful for needy families this year.

Halton Regional Police, in partnership with the Salvation Army and Canadian Tire, kicked off the third annual Toys for Tots program Wednesday at Canadian Tire on Market Drive.

The program will also run in Oakville, Burlington and Halton Hills.

The initiative will officially begin tomorrow and end around Christmas.

Individuals are asked to drop off cash donations at Canadian Tire locations, which will use the money to purchase toys from the store.

The toys will then be given to Salvation Army locations in the municipalities for distribution.

"On behalf of the chief (Ean Algar), I want to recognize Canadian Tire and Halton Honda for giving us this van to go around to collect the funds," Deputy Chief Gary Crowell said during the kick-off.

"In a way this (program) is an oxymoron. We live in an affluent community but so many are in need."

SUV donated

Halton Honda of Burlington donated an SUV for the program, which will be used to collect cash donations from various Canadian Tire stores in Halton.

Individuals wishing to donate toys can drop them off at the Milton police station, 490 Childs Dr.

The Toys for Tots program is spearheaded by Const. Chantal

Verrier, who said she came up with the idea after hearing Peel region organized a similar program.

"I thought Halton needed this in the community so I took it upon myself to start it up," she said.

"The program has been very successful in the past."

This is the second year the program has run in Milton, Const. Verrier said, adding the program has run in Burlington and Oakville since conception.

"The first year we raised \$37,000," she continued.

"Last year we raised \$63,000 and this year our goal is \$75,000. I have no qualms we will reach our goal."

Drew Mudge, owner of Milton's Canadian Tire, said the Toys for Tots program has been warmly supported by customers.

"We're looking forward to another successful year. It's a good feeling to be able to give back to the community."

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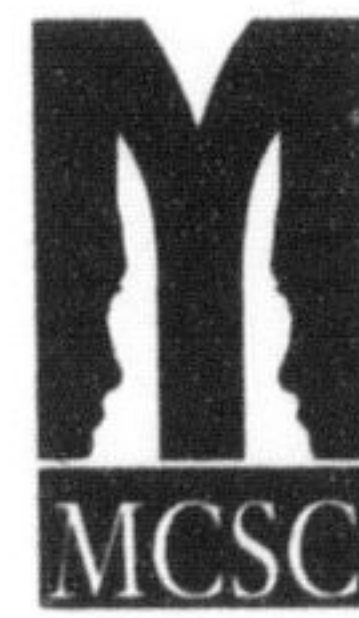
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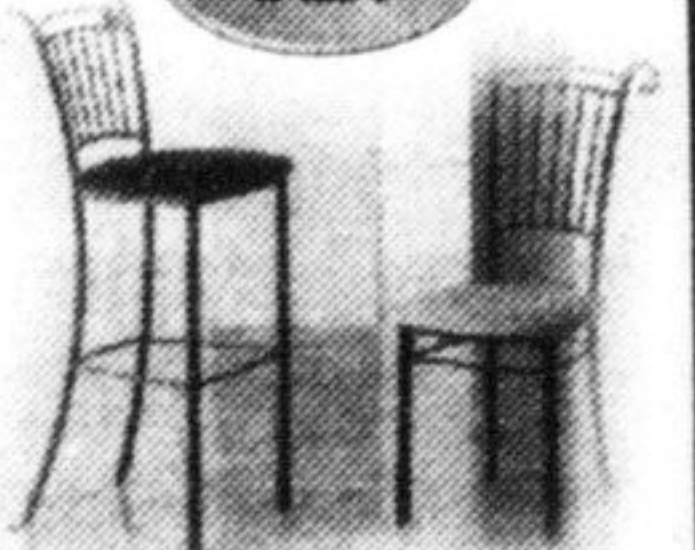
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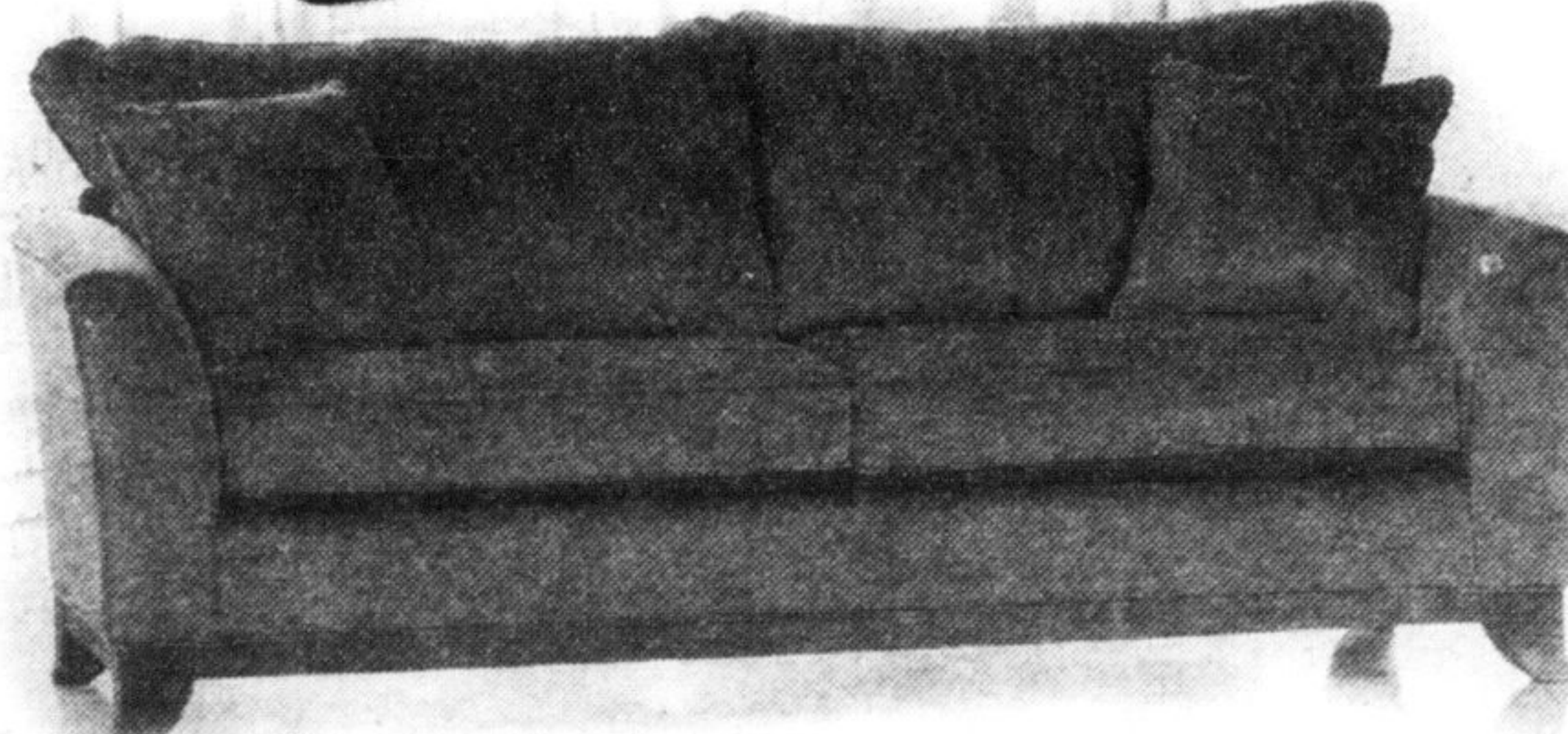
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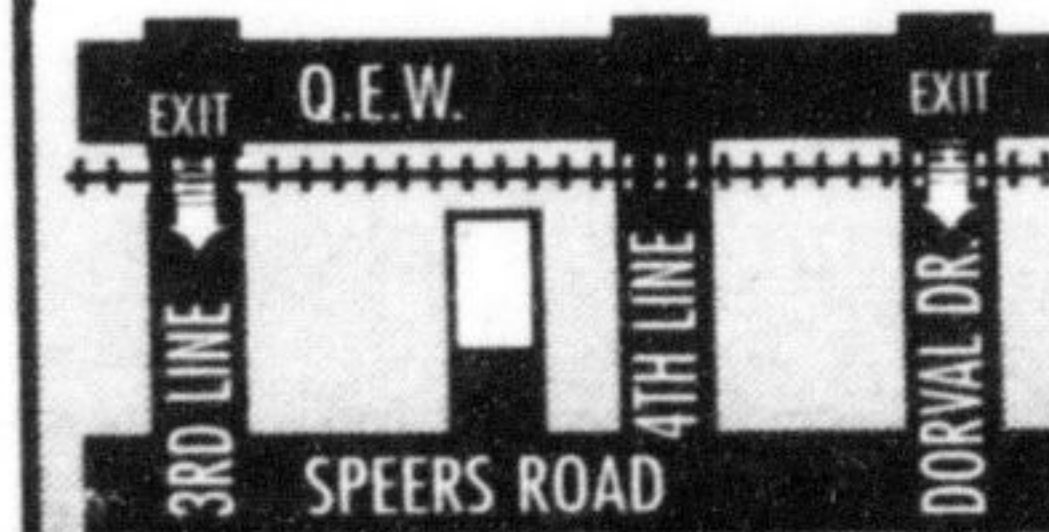
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