

# Low-income families not getting enough nutrition, says coalition

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
*The Champion*

If you were a Milton mother of two children, with a minimum wage job and a husband who was out of work, grocery shopping wouldn't be an easy task.

You'd find yourself with just \$3.50 left at the end of the month for basic amenities — including transportation, clothing, heat and hydro — by the time you paid for rent and basic, nutritious groceries. That's according to information released by the Halton Region Health Department last year.

It's a dilemma that's far more common than most Halton residents believe, said members of the Halton Anti-Poverty Coalition's Food Security Committee.

And it's one of the reasons families go without nutritious diets, opting instead for cheaper food items with less nutrition.

On March 20, the Food Security Committee held a consultation at the Halton Region Museum, designed as an information session and an opportunity for the committee to collect community input on food security. The issue tackled was how everyone — including low-income families — can access affordable and nutritious food.

"Halton's an affluent community, so many residents don't think there are people who can't afford food on a regular basis," said Lynn Garrison, a dietitian with the Halton Region Health Department and member of the Food Security Committee.

It's a myth the committee is trying to dispel.

In 2001, food banks in Halton served an average of 1,432 families each month — something the eight members of the committee see as proof of the huge need in Halton

for affordable food that's accessible to everyone.

The Food Security Committee was formed in 2000 and is currently involved in projects including community gardens, cooking demonstrations at food banks and trying to get a Good Food Box program going in Halton.

"A person gets a box of affordable, nutritious, fresh produce from a local farmer," said Lynne Russell of the Good Food Box program.

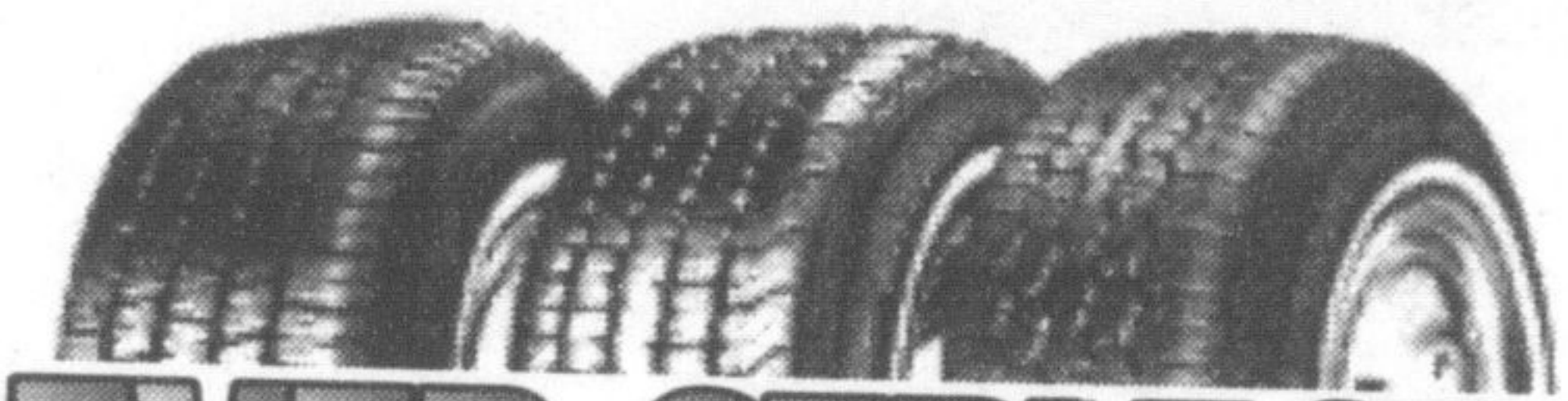
Ms Russell is a social planner with the Halton Social Planning Council, as well as a member of the Food Security Committee.

"It's packed by volunteers and picked up each month. Because it's a bulk buy, it's at a reduced price. Many of the people who use food banks don't get fresh produce. They pay (for the food box) at the beginning of the month when they

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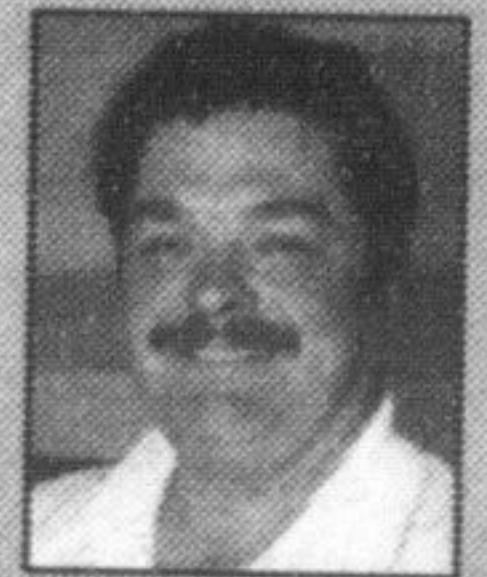
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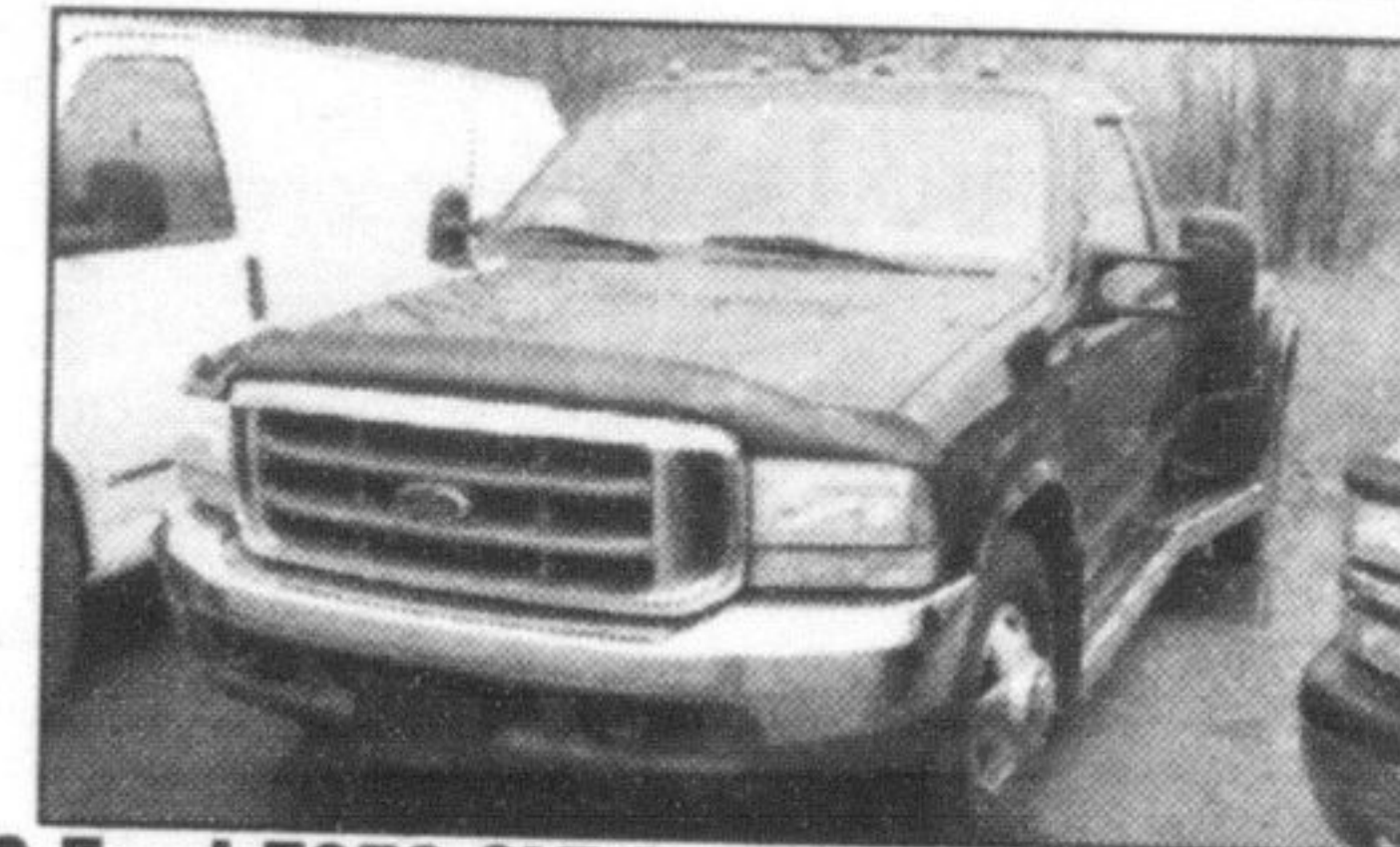
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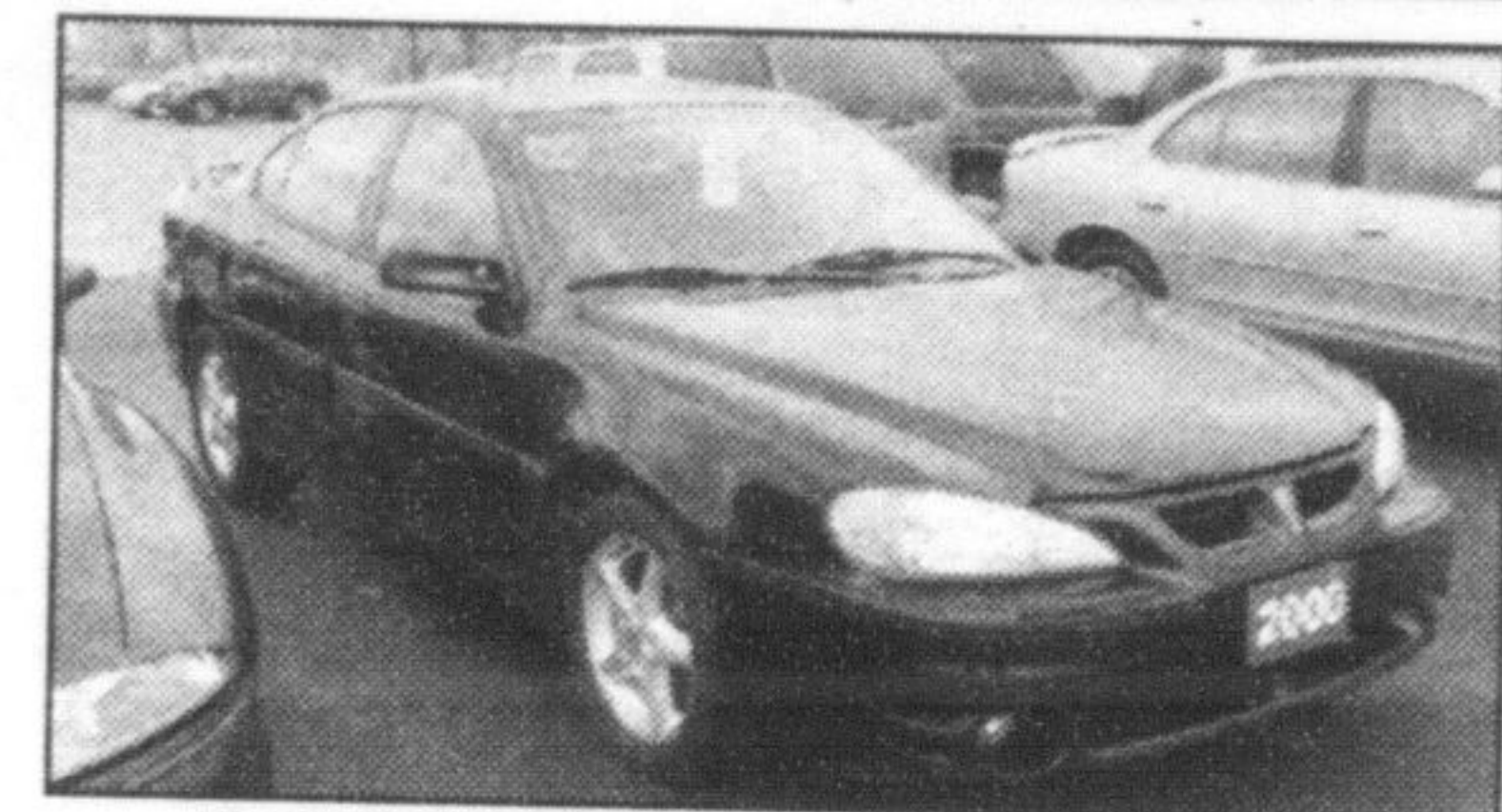
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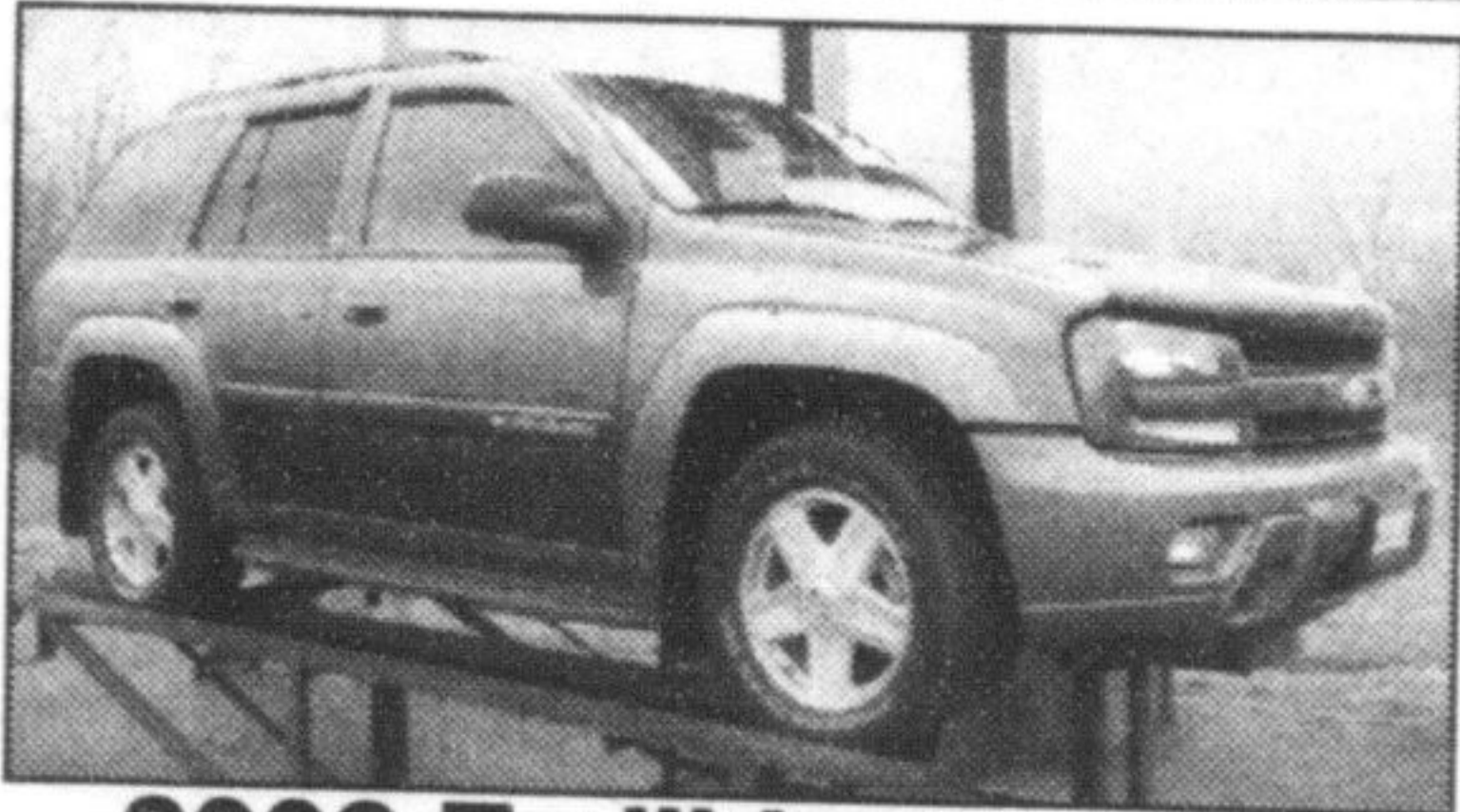
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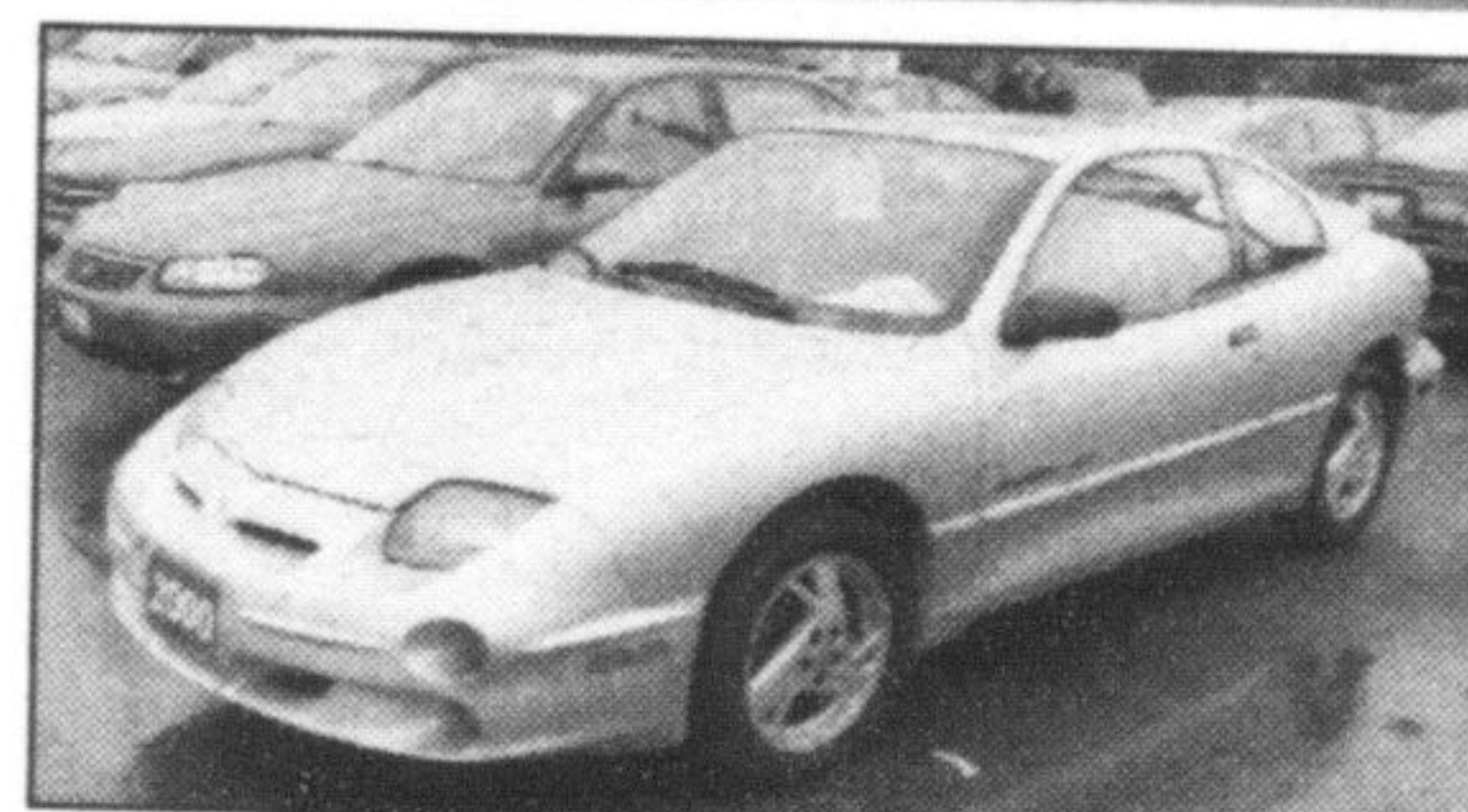
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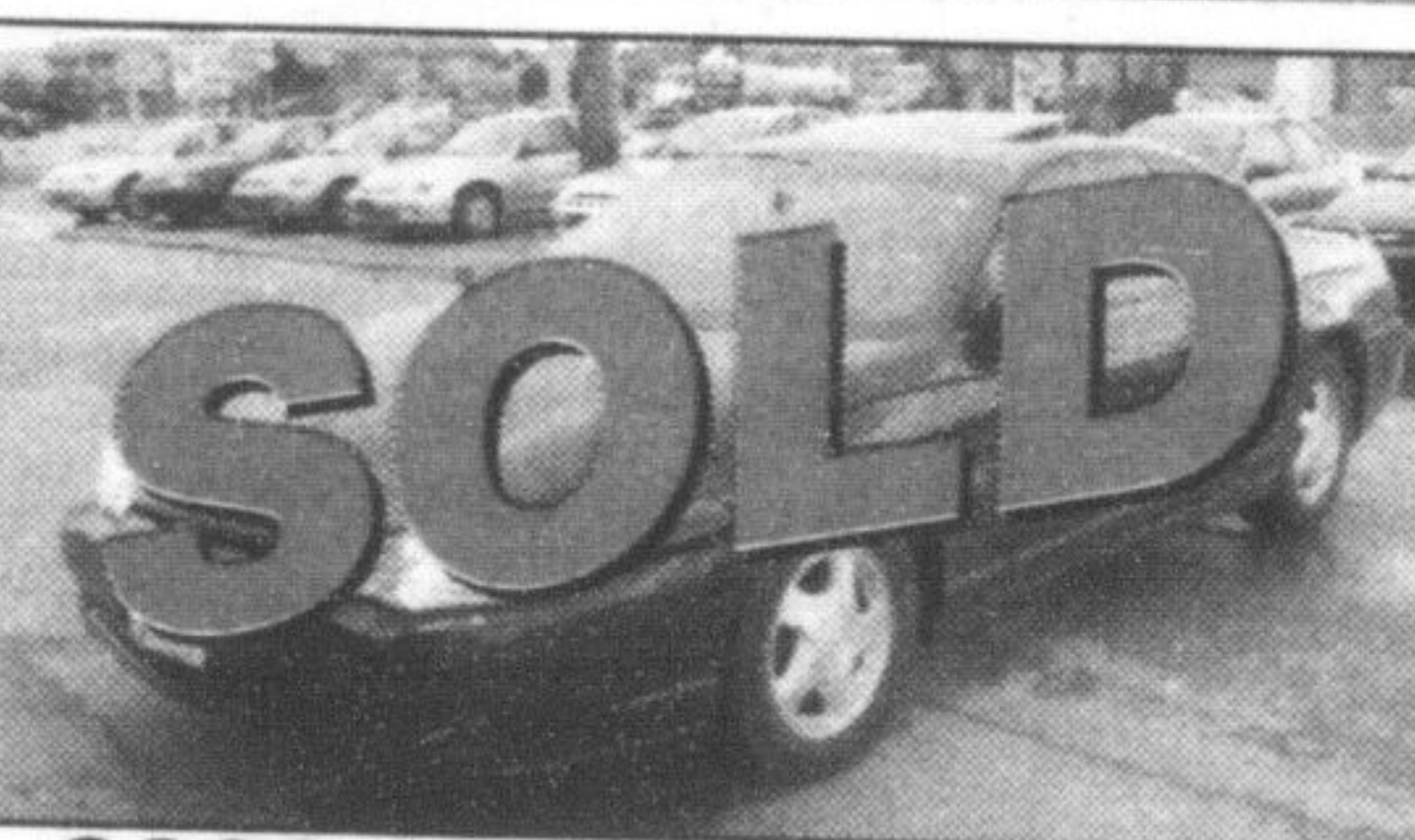
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