

# Forum to address issues of interest to rural residents

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**  
Special to The Champion

Halton Region will hold a meeting, entitled the Rural Community Forum, to address issues that impact rural residents.

Scheduled for next Tuesday at Halton Region Museum at the Kelso Conservation Area, the meeting will be a joint event between Halton Region and the Halton Regional Police Service.

It will discuss issues of security, safety, speeding, illegal parking, traffic and road maintenance as well as ways to enhance communication with rural residents.

"The meeting will deal with mostly police-related issues," said Halton Regional Chair Joyce Savoline. "We will also be discussing ways that we can develop communication systems that rural residents can depend on."

The idea for this meeting originated with Ms Savoline during election time. She said, having spoken to so many residents in the weeks prior to election, she became concerned about the communication gap that existed in certain rural areas.

"Halton Region is committed to the open flow of information between government and the community," she said. "It is always our practice at Halton to be transparent and accessible. Public consultations assist us in meeting this commitment by allowing us to hear from our residents about the issues meaningful to them."

Halton Police Chief Ean Algar will also be in attendance at the meeting to answer questions relating to safety and security in the rural communities. Vandalism, such as destruction of mailboxes, speeding on rural roads, and road maintenance are just a few examples of the problems affecting rural areas.

Although the meeting is dedicated to the primary issues that have been outlined, any questions residents have about other issues will be noted and responded to by either the Region or the police afterward.

"Communication is very different in the rural areas," emphasized Ms Savoline. "In urban areas, it is very cut and dry. In the rural areas, oftentimes residents are remote and separate from the rest of their community. Some rural residents do not get information that pertains to their area. Media within the municipality does not always cover the corners of the municipality and we are hoping to engage the media to try to fix the system to reach rural people. It is not how many people are affected, it is if any people are affected."

Ms Savoline said the meeting is the first of likely an on-going project and would like to see the meetings held twice a year to keep residents informed and communication lines open.

The Rural Community Forum is open to everyone and it's hoped that many will attend to discuss the issues of concern. It will be held at 6 p.m. in the Hearth Room at the Halton Regional Museum October 12.

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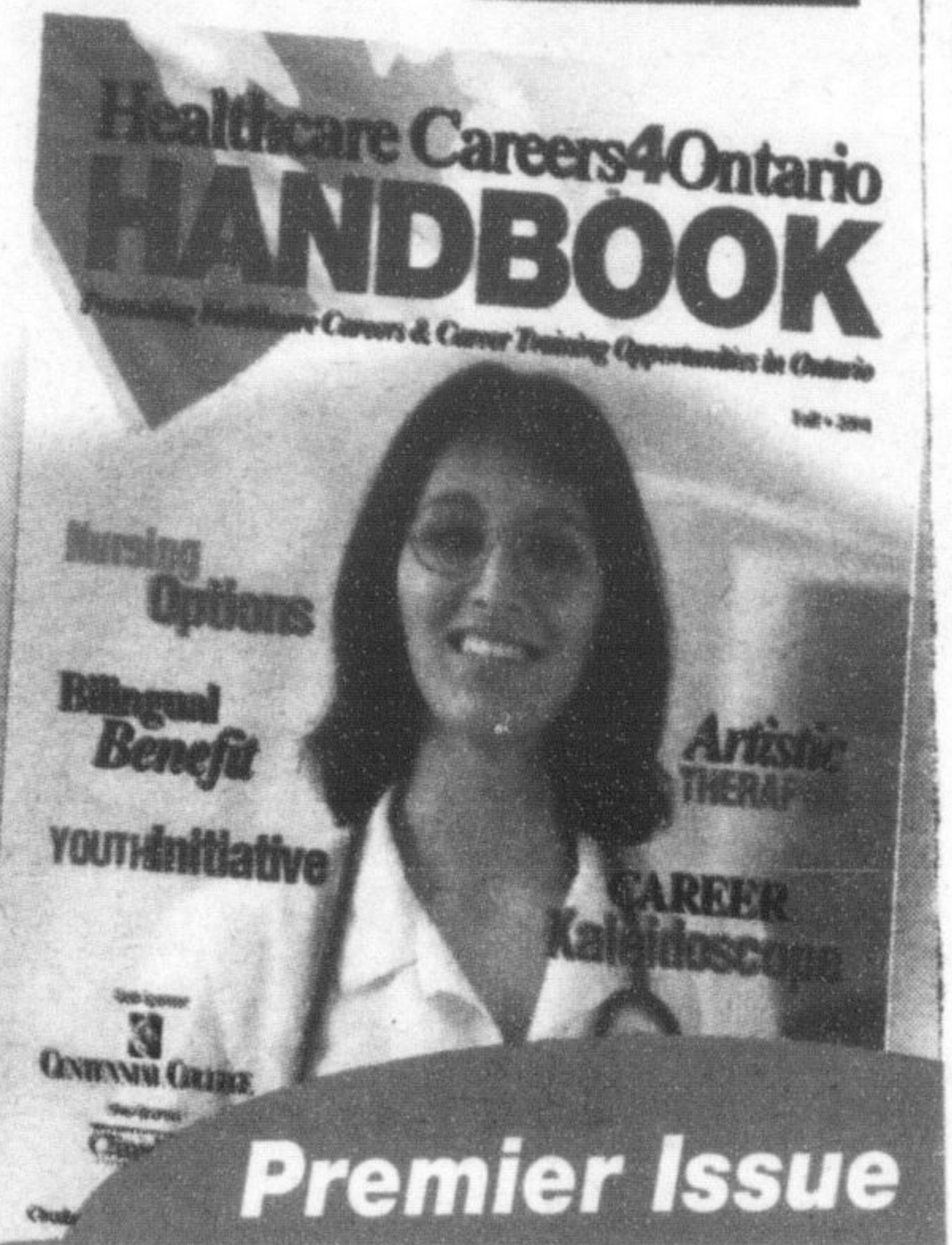
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