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*who donated a dozen roses
to the winner of our Valentine's draw,
Pinkie Singh.*

Everyone submitting a Valentine's message in our
Tuesday, February 14th, issue was entered into the draw.

**The Canadian
Champion**

Halton-area nurses fear health care privatization, job losses with LHINs

Plenty of concerns raised over proposed restructuring at annual nurses' meeting

By Melanie Cummings
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Fears over competition among medical care providers, privatization and subsequent job losses were prominent among the questions Halton's registered nurses directed to Pat Mandy, who now oversees the management of a large chunk of the health care services provided in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant.

Mandy heads up one of 14 Local Health Integration Networks, or LHINs, now operating in Ontario.

These regional bodies are expected to better co-ordinate services between health care services in their geographic domains and reduce duplications.

While LHINs haven't passed all the required legislative hurdles already, \$40 million has been earmarked for 2005-06 alone. Second reading passed in November 2005 and final approval for the non-profit corporations is expected in the spring.

Nevertheless, Mandy has been touring every hospital operating in her local health network — talking and meeting with administrators and providers, including the 100 members of the Halton chapter of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario that invited her to its annual meeting recently at Rattlesnake Point Golf Club.

All of this current dialogue, though, will turn to action when final approval for the 14 LHINs are given.

"Boards can't just look at their own organization but those that refer their patients to them, and those that to which they refer their patients."

PAT MANDY

"We can't say to a hospital you must do it this way but we can say here's incentive funding to try and do things differently," said Mandy.

LHINs are responsible for:

- Community Care Access Centres, which provide information and referrals to the public, community agencies and service providers including delivering health and personal support services in homes; arranging in-school services for children with special needs and managing admissions to long-term care homes, among other services.

- Community support service organizations such as non-profit or for-profit foot care or caregiver respite.

- Mental health and addiction agencies.

- The 54 community health centres in Ontario.

- Long-term care services.

Mandy allayed fears of opening floodgates to privatization. "We won't

be involved in a competitive bidding process," she said.

And the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Web site (www.lhins.on.ca) devoted to LHINs states that "the legislation would prohibit private payments for services that result from an integration decision."

LHINs are based on a principle that community-based care is best planned, coordinated and funded within the local community because residents are better equipped and more aware of their health service needs and priorities.

"A decision on local care shouldn't be made from Queen's Park," said Mandy.

Starting with community discussion and forums, LHINs would work with local health providers and community members on planning. Then, services would be coordinated and eventually Mandy and company would provide funding and resources to local health providers.

"Boards can't just look at their own organization but those that refer their patients to them, and those that to which they refer their patients," said Mandy.

There are five people currently on staff in the Grimsby-based offices of this Hamilton-Niagara-Haldimand-Brant LHIN.

"It's a partnership of equals," said Mandy, who's also a registered nurse and certified health executive. "And an unprecedented change in the health-care environment."

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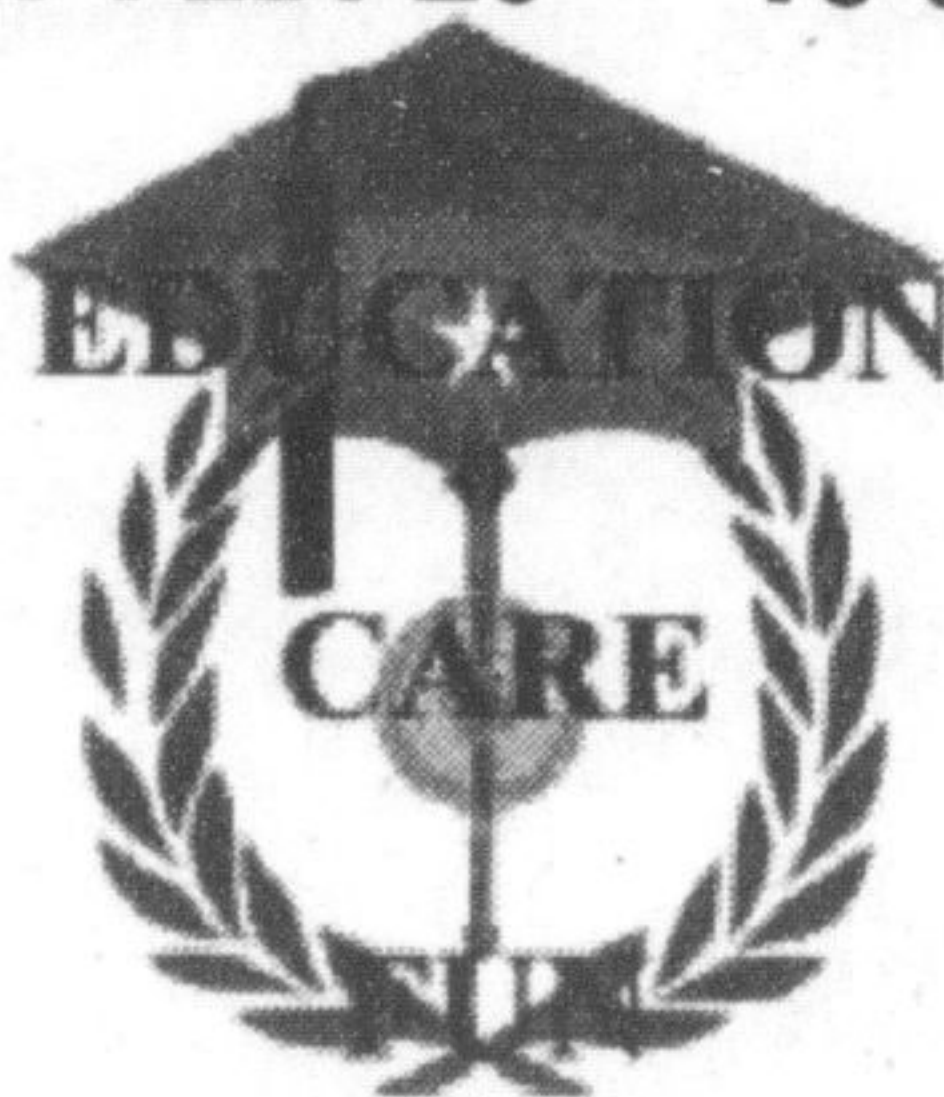


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3 Choices of Nursery School Programs for Fall 2006

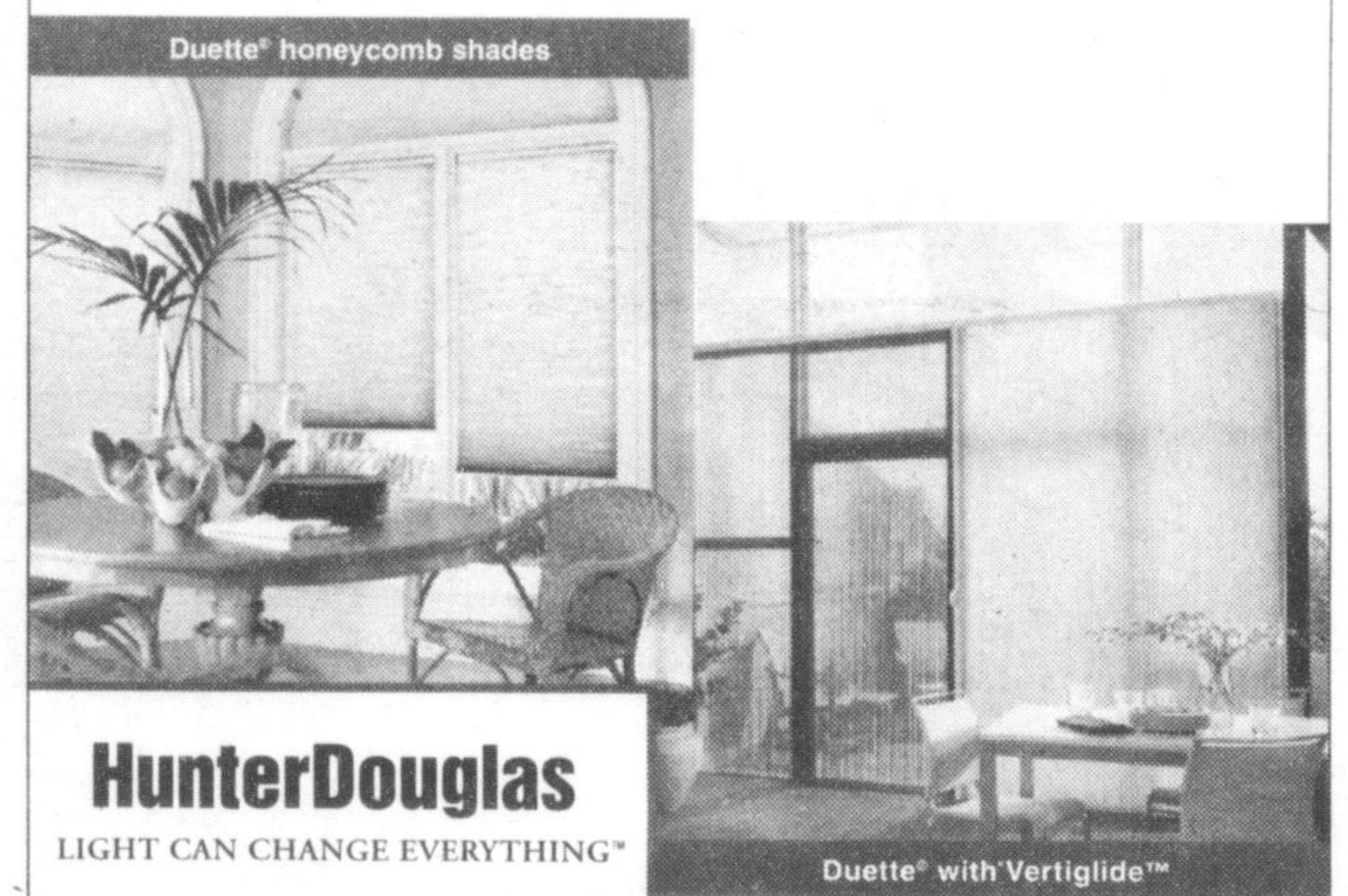
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