

# Not enough for youths to do in town, say residents

*Shortage of activities primary concern in Community Matters report*

By **Stephanie Thiessen**  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

A lack of activities for youth as well as young people who are involved with drug abuse, violence and racism topped a list of concerns local residents have.

This information was part of a report entitled Community Matters recently released by the United Way of Milton.

A town hall meeting was held March 6 at Hugh Foster Hall to distribute the report, discuss its findings and — hopefully — come up with some solutions.

“We found that Miltonians are proud and enthusiastic about their community,” said Susan Lynch, Community Matters co-ordinator.

The other priorities revealed in the report, in order of importance, are growth, including community facilities, services, traffic issues and economic stability; transportation, particularly for students and seniors, and the lack of out-of-town linkages; multiculturalism and the need for a plan for changing demographics; communication between “new” and “old” Miltonians; volunteerism; and accessibility to services.

The Community Matters project came as a result of a \$500,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to 17 rural United Ways, of which Milton was one. The groups partnered together over 30 months to produce the reports, Lynch explained.

“We wanted to gain a better understanding of our community, to determine the most pressing social issues and concerns facing our residents,” said executive director Anne Eadie in the report.

“We wanted to learn what was considered a priority, and most of all we wanted to hear what you thought might be achievable to improve or make changes to these issues and concerns.”

The recently-released report is the first of two. The second will incorporate the feedback expressed at the meeting as well as a meeting held in Campbellville March 7.

The first meeting was originally planned for March 1 in town, but had to be cancelled due to poor weather.

The outcome of the project will help guide the United Way of Milton’s strategic planning, Lynch explained in her presentation.

The information was compiled as a result of four community priority consultations in 2005 and a survey distributed last year.

Residents, businesses, agencies and more were asked what they thought was working well in the community, what services could be added and what the most pressing issues are.

The purpose of the town hall meeting was to go one step

further. Participants were divided into groups based on topics and discussed two questions: What is the vision for your community? What role can the United Way play in this vision?

One person from each group then presented to the larger group.

Elaine Collins of Big Brothers Big Sisters Halton reported on her group’s discussion of youth. She said they thought it was important that young people feel a part of their community and that there be more for youths to do around town.

“Programs should be developed for youth, but more importantly, by youth,” she said.

Kevin Black, who’s with the Our Kids Network Milton Hub, reported on his group’s discussion of multiculturalism.

He said there’s a need to celebrate diversity within Milton. Participants in the group spoke of the need for education to service providers and the community in general about diversity.

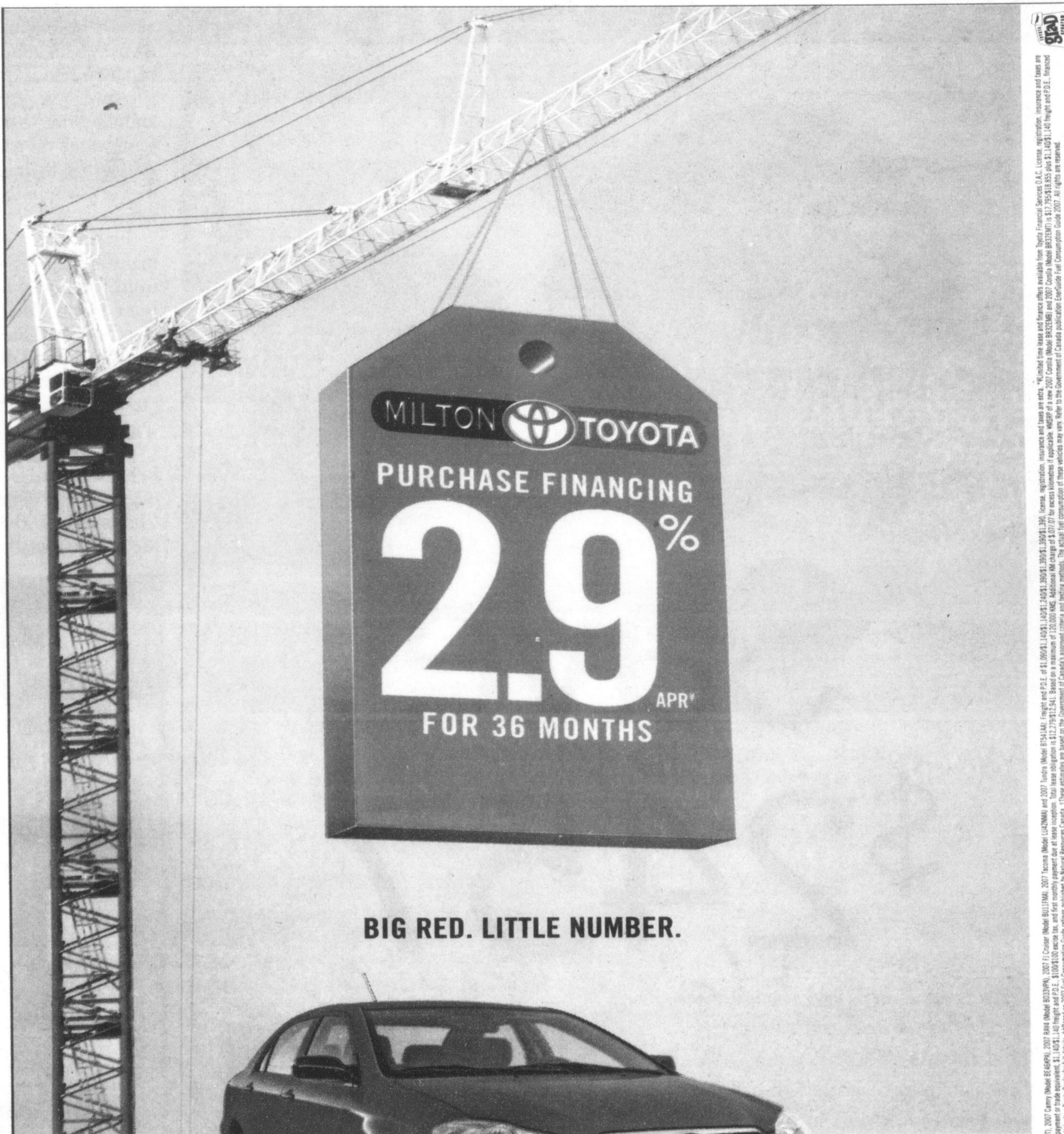
The Halton Multicultural Council, he said, can be a bridge between service providers and individuals.

He also said the group talked about the need for transitional housing for immigrants, of which there isn’t any in Milton.

Growth was a topic that encompassed many elements. The spokesperson for that group was Shelagh Dobson of Halton Region, who said: “Our group felt growth was the number one priority.”

They broke their discussion into infrastructure and social capacity, and discussed the need for a hospital expansion,

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