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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1992

COMMUNITY NOTEBOOK

Heard the Calling: Three graduates of E. C. Drury High School took part in the Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer as graduate engineers this spring. Don Durand attends the Royal Military College of Canada and Rich Eguchi and Jay Garces both attend Queen's University. Drury science teacher Dave Wright, who taught the men and who received his engineering in 1958, participated in the ringing ceremony at Kingston, March 15.

Speaking of Agriculture: A public forum, 'Who Speaks for Agriculture' will be held at Bishop Reding High School on Wednesday, Mar. 25 from 8-10 p.m. Speakers will discuss the ability of the agricultural community to influence the media; communication between industry producers and consumers; and the voice of agriculture in the media. A discussion period will follow the presentations.

Dig Into Spring: Learn to plant a perennial garden at a workshop Tuesday, March 31. Mary-Dean Crawford of Crawford's Country Gardens will share her expertise at Milton Public Library. Mrs. Crawford and her husband Jack Crawford specialize in perennials, propagating and growing about 350 varieties currently. Tickets cost \$2 for the 7:30 p.m. workshop. Call 875-2665 for details and to reserve a spot.

Gardeners' Paradise: 'A Breath of Spring Flower Show' will feature gardening demonstrations, design ideas, a tea room and grow some proceeds for Acton Social Services. The agency is presenting the show at Tuitman's Garden Centre on Highway 25, just south of Acton the weekend of March 27-29. The show starts Friday at 7 p.m. and runs until 9 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Race Relations: The Halton Multicultural Council is presenting a series of activities during a conference on race relations and ethnocultural equity next week at the Burlington Holiday Inn. The activities will be kicked off on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Saturday, Mar. 21 at 11 a.m. at Halton Regional Headquarters, 1151 Bronte Rd., Oakville. Programs run Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Mar. 24, 26, 27, 28). For information call the council at 842-2486. Cost is \$15.

Tax Return Help: Revenue Canada has produced a video to assist in preparing tax returns and its available at Milton Public Library. The video leads viewers through areas which have caused concern in the past and emphasizes changes affecting the 1991 income tax return.

Sweeten the Day: A tour of the sugar bush, followed by a feast of pancakes topped with maple syrup is in store for visitors to Mountsberg Wildlife Centre. Maple Syrup Time continues weekends, holidays until April 12 and during March Break.

Long-time farm office moves north next week

By KAREN SMITH
The Champion

FARMERS DON'T NEED to be alarmed that the local Ministry of Agriculture and Food office is closing its doors next week, says Milton's acting agricultural representative.

The ministry's re-location to Halton Hills may mean an extra 15-minute drive for users of the facility, but the services it provides will not suffer, vows Marie McNabb.

Because the number of farmers in Halton and surrounding regions continues to drop, the Ontario government has decided Halton and Peel are now only in need of one office instead of the three separate facilities currently operating in Milton, Georgetown and Brampton.

As a result, offices in Brampton and Milton — which opened in the summer of 1979 — will become extinct March 27.

"The number of farmers in Halton has been decreasing," says Ms McNabb. "There isn't as much agriculture here as there has been in the past."

There is proof in numbers. In 1976, Halton was home to 1,035 farmers who had gross incomes of \$25,000 or more. Ten years later, the number of farmers has deflated to 834, and Ms McNabb estimates about 100 more have since either closed shop or moved on.

Urbanization is the main reason Halton farmers are becoming scarce, says Milton's acting agricultural representative for the last 18 months.

Ms McNabb replaced former ag. rep. Phyllis MacMaster, the first woman to take the post.

Although two offices are closing, no jobs will be lost as a result of the move. As of March 30, employees will work out of the Halton Hills facility located at 332 Guelph Street.

Ms McNabb will be one of two people assigned the position she previously held for seven years with the ministry in Orangeville — farm management specialist. Barry Sinclair will be the ag. rep. for Halton-Peel.

Initial news of the Milton office closure left a bad taste in many farmers' mouths, says Ms McNabb, but she maintains the only difference will be in distance.

"I thought we were fairly well off," she comments. "We're already in Halton. We don't have to go into Peel."

Situated in a small commercial park on Wilson Drive for the last 13 years, the town's Ministry of Agriculture and Food

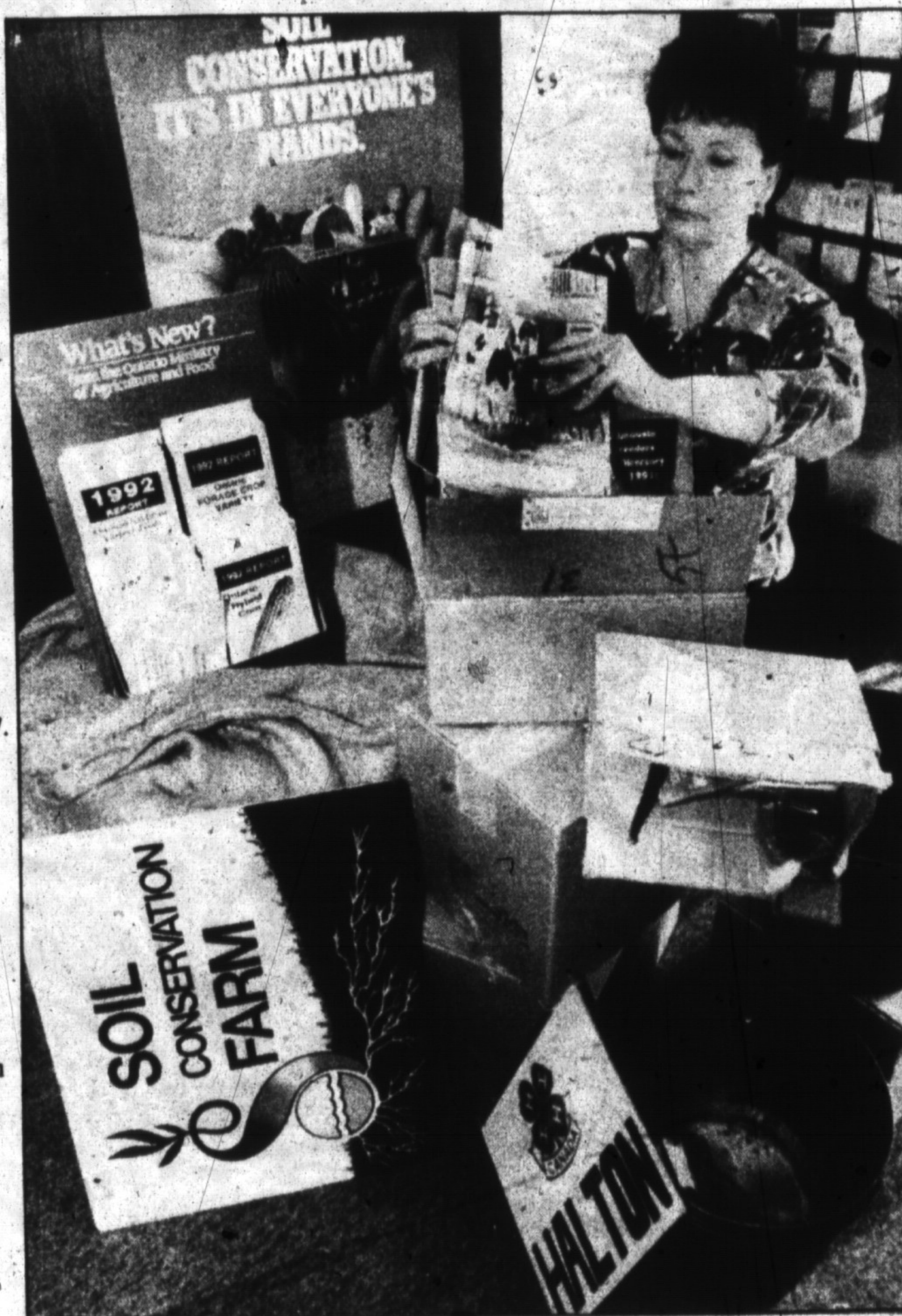


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Rosemary Howard, a secretary with the provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Food office on Wilson Drive, packs up supplies in preparation for the move to Georgetown March 27.

office has served thousands of local farmers as well as the general public.

Prior to its present location, the office — for 20 years — operated out of 181 Main St.

But eventually, the ministry needed a better-equipped facility. Then ag-rep Henry Stanley found such a place at 17 Wilson Dr.

"In the first few years, agricultural representatives from across Ontario came to see our model office (on Main Street)," Mr. Stanley said in 1979.

"In recent years, we have been apologizing to our farm people for the

poor conditions in our board room."

Since it first opened its doors, farmers have approached the office for information on innovative farming techniques and government legislation, as well as programs and courses offered by the ministry.

In turn, the general public has sought advice in such areas as lawn and garden maintenance, and even recipes, said Ms McNabb.

Farm groups have also used the facility free of charge to hold meetings — a service which will be available as usual at the Halton Hills office.

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