

# Community rallies around call to end racism

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
Special to The Champion

Heavy snow blanketed the ground while cold, crisp winds blew through town two weeks ago as mother nature unleashed one of her last winter storms.

Yet inside Hugh Foster Hall, a warm air of peace and unity blocked out the cold — as residents of Milton and abroad, adults and children alike, gathered together to celebrate cultural awareness.

A full house was on hand at the local celebration of the 30th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Highlighting the open-house event, organized by the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council, was a speech by renowned

human rights activist Rosemary Brown, now Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

"Today's international celebration represents the world's decision to wipe out discrimination. You may think you're just a small community, but you have already shown you can turn adversity into good things, I would like to congratulate you on being so Canadian," began Ms Brown.

Her comments referred to the 1993 incident in Halton Hills, where seven members of the Ku Klux Klan, dressed in full white regalia, showed up on the streets of Georgetown and Acton to promote their message of white supremacy.

She said instead of taking to the streets, members of the community opted to establish the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council —

reconfirming their commitment to end racism.

She also pointed out Ontario's past commitment to the elimination of racism, dating as far back as 1793, when Sir John Graves Simcoe passed an anti-slavery law in the province. It was the first of its kind in the British empire.

She said steps continued to be taken right up until the establishment of the Ontario Human Rights Code in 1962. "This is not an ordinary province in a not so ordinary country. You're very special in more ways than you may realize."

However, she said Canada's record regarding discrimination has not been perfect. Along with the nearby appearance of the KKK, she said other racially motivated groups such as the much publicized Heritage Front have continued to flourish in this country, with "limited success in

stopping them."

She also spoke of hate mail spilling through the Internet, and holocaust denial material being distributed at a movie theatre in Kitchener during a screening of Shindler's List.

"We must be aware that racism is not isolated to a few select individuals. The key to combating it is through open dialogue and education. All of us in society need to fight against this. The vision can only be achieved by a collective effort, when enough of us dare to dream of such a society."

"This North Halton Council is helping to making the dream a reality, with the belief that people can and will change. However, this commitment can not just occur one day a year," stressed Ms Brown.

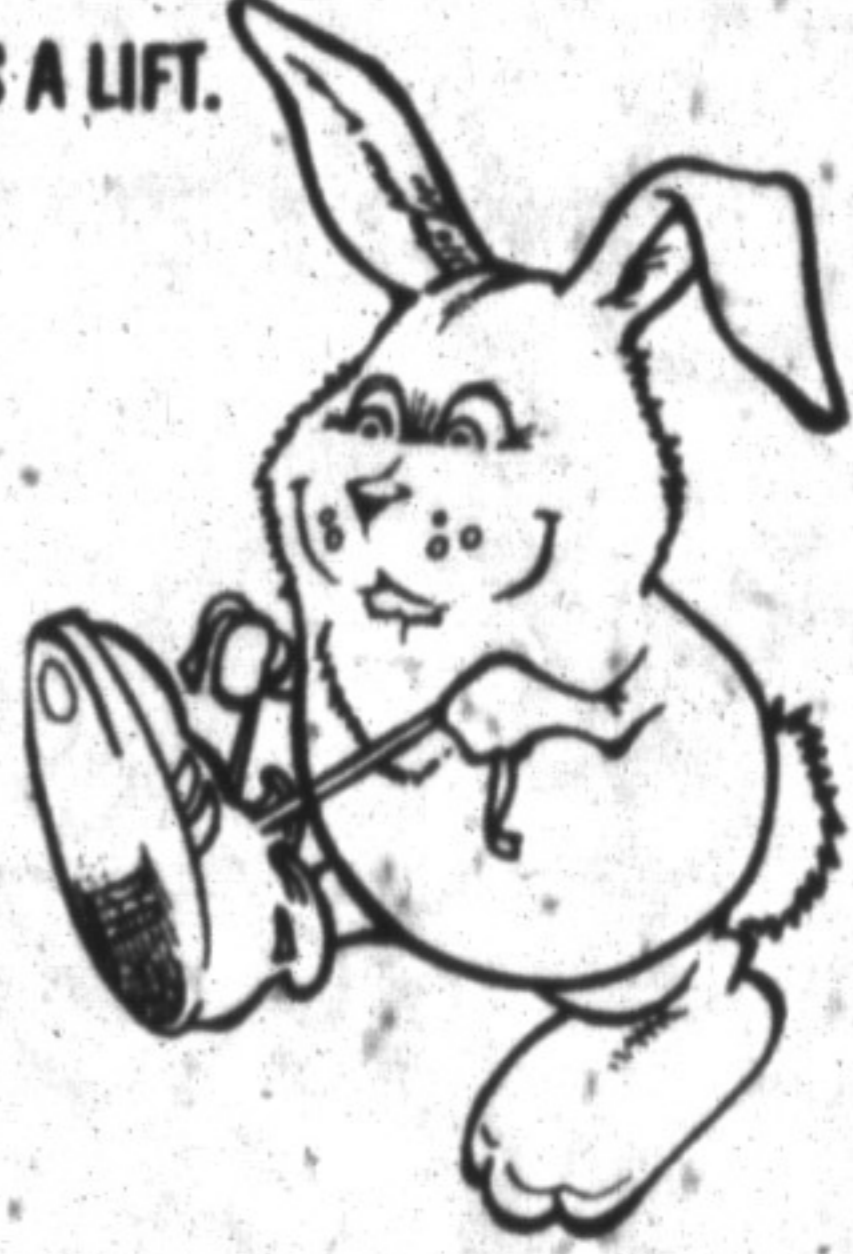
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