

Second centre opens to facilitate growing number of migrant workers

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Since migrant workers are Roman Catholic, they attend mass at local churches,

including St. Elizabeth Seton in Newmarket. The Bradford centre, funded by the United Food and Commercial Workers

Union, provides free services to migrant agricultural workers. The migrant worker plays a key role in helping the industry get Ontario-grown

produce from fields to grocery store shelves. As well as offering assistance with CPP, Ms Lopez fields questions about

Ontario health insurance, employment insurance, workers' compensation and income tax.

In the event a migrant worker is being taken advantage of by an employer or is working in conditions where he is exposed to danger and is vulnerable to exploitation, Ms Lopez steps in.

She's able to help with problems with working conditions, hours of work, rest periods and overtime pay.

The centre is open from Wednesday to Sunday. Since migrant workers are encouraged to keep in close contact with family at home, Ms Lopez helps the men arrange telephone calls to Mexico.

"A call home is very

important to the migrant worker," Ms Lopez said.

When the first Migrant Workers Centre opened in Leamington last summer, between 3,000 and 4,000 migrant workers were placed on farms in the western part of the province.

The Leamington centre was overwhelmed by migrant workers, Ms Lopez said.

The union, aware of the growing numbers of migrant workers being employed on farms in York Region, decided to open its second centre here.

"It's busy. We provide vital outreach services to all seasonal migrant workers," Ms Lopez stressed.

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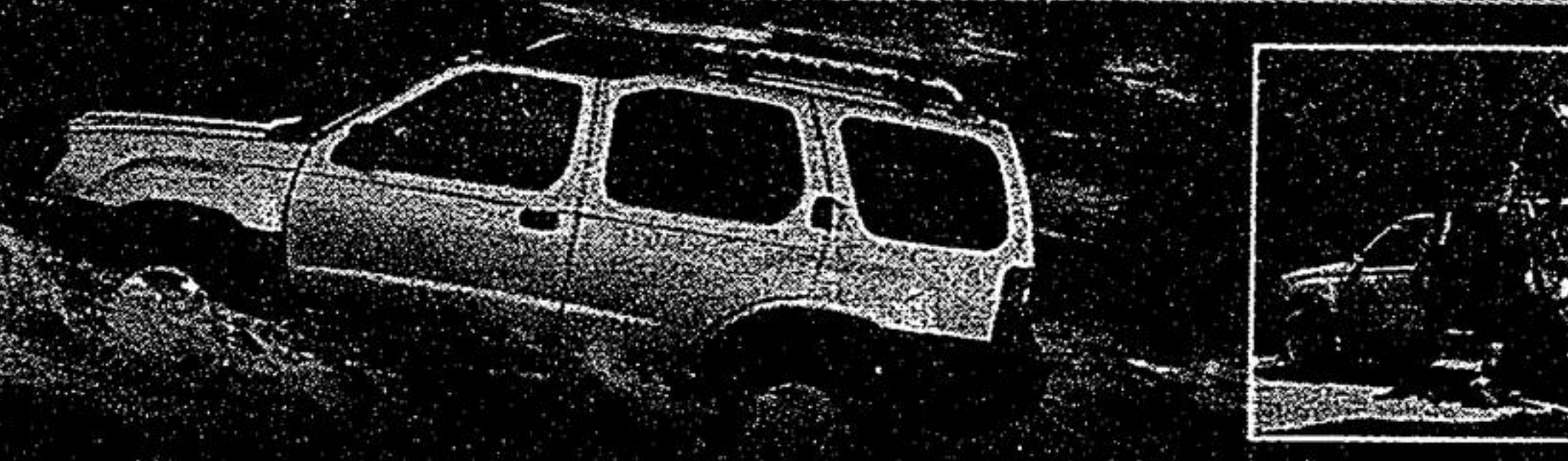
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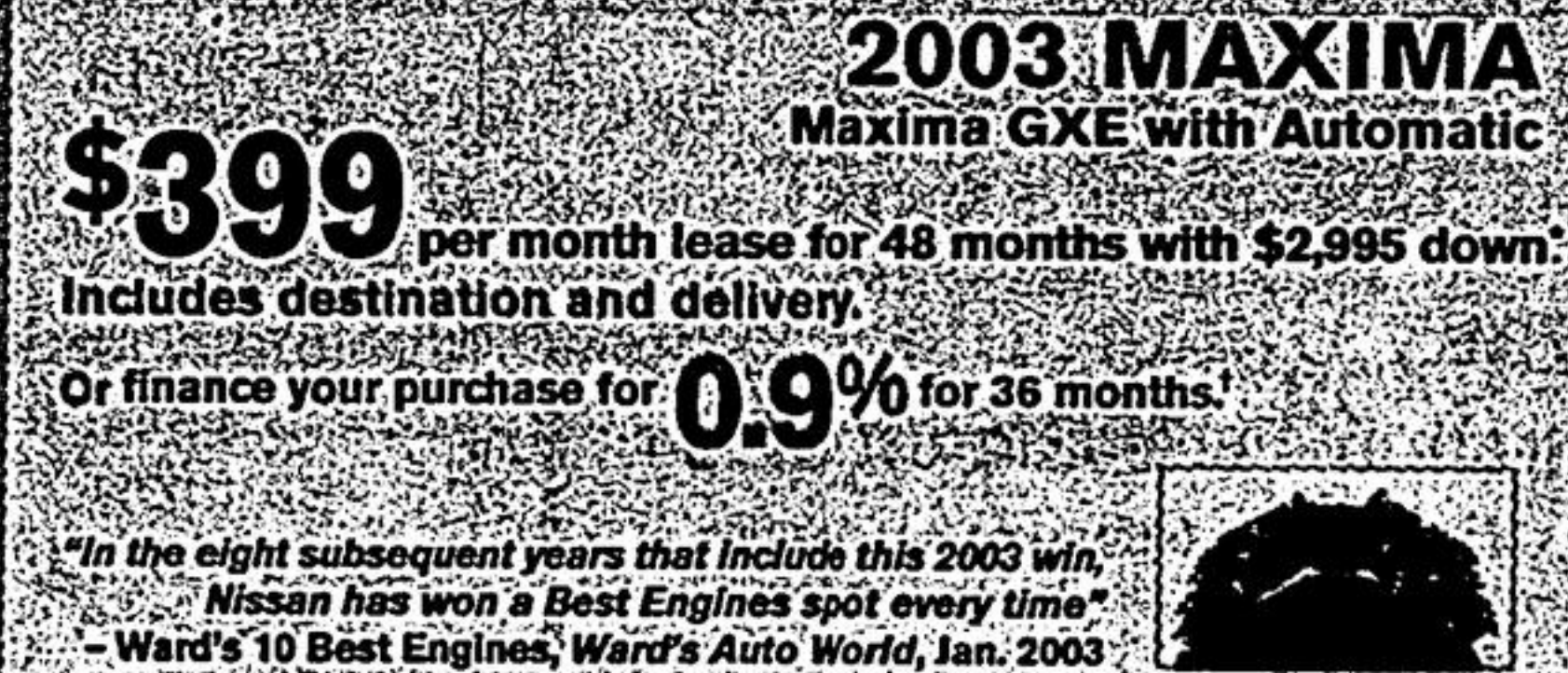


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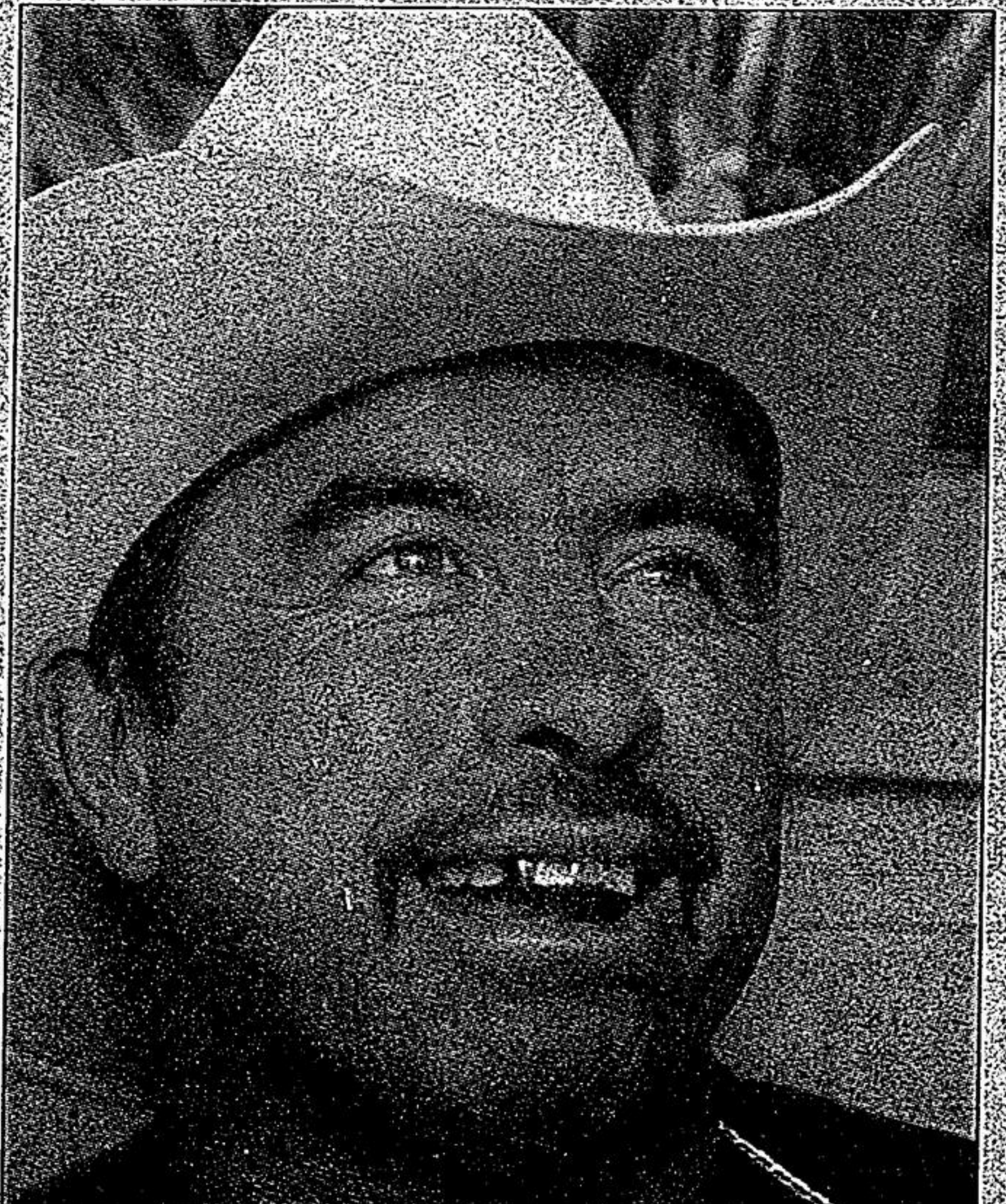


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STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Marcelino Espinosa-Flores chats with fellow Mexican workers at Bradford Immigrant and Community Services.

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