

# No stars, spurs, six guns Sheriff's job hard work

by Jennifer Barr  
Robert MacIsaac Sprowl is very serious about his job as Sheriff of Halton County. No guns, spurs or silver stars for him. Instead a grey suit, an establishment office and shelves full of law books signify the office of County Sheriff for "Mac" Sprowl.

Handling all the court documents for the Municipal Court in Milton means volumes of work for the sheriff and his staff of 23 people including Deputy Sheriff Weldon "Steamer" Emmerson. Both are residents of Halton Hills.

Business in the sheriff's office is up 35 percent during 1977 as opposed to the usual increase of around 20 per cent. Mac attributes this to the economic depression, a rise in debt problems and resulting court actions.

The office postage bill from January 1977 to August of the same year was a staggering \$3,600.

Some of the court documents going through Mac's hands include all county and supreme court actions involving debt; writs of summonses, statements of claims; notices of motion; notices of trial; examination of judgments against debtors; examinations of discovery; subpoenas; notice of petition for divorce; all warrants of writs of fieri facias and attachments thereof.

Sounds terribly boring but Mac says not at all. "I've been assaulted serving a summons. I've had three threats against my life. It's not in the least boring," emphasized Sheriff Sprowl.

How did a quiet spoken Acton farmer from one of the area's leading families come to sit behind the sheriff's desk. Mac has had a fascinating career from agricultural student to author to political candidate.

As winner in 1954 of the Lord Nuffield scholarship for agriculture, Mac spent his post secondary education in England studying farming methods there. He also studied agriculture in this country and was involved in his family's large well-drilling company for many years.

His activities with the Halton Junior Farmers included presidency, presidency of the Fall Fair, presidency of the Halton Federation of Agriculture, and a membership in the Board of Governors of the

Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He was the publishing editor of a book, "Leaves of Silver," a historical account of the first 25 years of the Halton Junior Farmers Association.

Later, after an unsuccessful attempt to gain the Progressive Conservative seat in Halton, he was offered the job as Deputy Sheriff.

"Good heavens, no," was his reaction, but he later applied and won the position when the former deputy retired.

That was 14 years ago during which Mac spent seven years as Deputy under Andy Frank and seven years as Sheriff.

There are no specific qualifications required for sheriff but according to Mac, "You can't be a dumb bunny—you've got to be good."

"Steamer" Emmerson, current deputy, is well-known as Georgetown's most popular master of ceremonies at any community event. He also happens to be an ex-mayor of Georgetown.

With business up so much Mac finds his office pressures greatly increased. Two years ago a larger office was built for staff but the Sheriff doesn't feel his staff will increase in number—just increase productivity. He says his six clerk-stenographers work harder than those in the private sector.

The office serves seven courts running out of the same building and has 6500 "live" judgments filed in the vault. The "Dead" (non-current) files are kept in the Mississauga archives.

This year alone, the office will process 5,000 documents, 2,000 writs of fieri facias, 65,000 names will be searched for real estate, and 1,500 jurors will be served.

"There's more to it than it looks," comments Sheriff Sprowl. "There's a tremendous amount of volume. I've worked harder at this than I did at farming."

Some of the things he doesn't like about his job are evictions and seizing and selling.

"I try to work with debtors and solve problems before I go to that length."

"A sheriff has to be even-handed and not destroy anyone," he says. "The difficulty is in trying to collect large amounts of money from a writ without destroying (the debtor)."

Anyone involved in a writ has a period of



SHERIFFS DON'T HAVE GUNS these days. They have books, hundreds of them. Halton County Sheriff Mac Sprowl and Deputy Sheriff Steamer Emmerson examine some of the 306 provincial Acts the Sheriff's office deals with. Business of prosecuting debtors is up this year due to the economic recession, according to the Sheriff.

grace to pay debts or dispute. After that, says the sheriff, chattel goods may be seized to cover debts. It takes a year after the writ before a property may be seized and sold.

"There's always a tremendous amount

of pressure from both sides," Sprowl comments ruefully.

But Mac Sprowl is tall and his shoulders are broad. He looks as if he can take the pressure.

A sheriff has to.

## Social Services

# Budget exceeds guide

The proposed 1978 operating budget for regional community and social services represents an increase in the region's expenses of 8.2 per cent over last year. Regional Council in September opted to hold the line at 5.4 per cent.

The budget package recommended by the community and social services committee for submission to regional council for its approval includes provision for the Regional Health Unit, the Social and Family Services Department, Halton Centennial Manor, the Children's Aid Society, agency grants and hospital debt charges. These add up to \$4,301,900 in costs to the region.

The proposed budget was divided into provincial and regional expenses. Adding expenses which are reimbursed by the province brings the total budget to almost \$10.3 million. The provincial portion of the budget comes to \$5,991,000—an increase of 6.9 per cent over last year. The total community and social services budget in 1977 was just over \$9.5 million. Estimates for the regional

portion of the proposed 1978 budget break down as follows: Regional Health Unit \$455,900, an increase of 5.7 per cent over last year; Social and Family Services Department \$693,000, an increase of 6.9 per cent; Halton Centennial Manor \$1,771,800, an increase of 2.7 per cent; hospital grants and debt charges \$992,100, an increase of 21.7 per cent; Children's Aid Society \$295,800, an increase of seven per cent; agency grants \$93,300, an increase of 13.8 per cent.

Burlington councillor and committee chairman Walter Mulkevic argued that the Board of Health Budget and the Children's Aid Society budget were separate units and that hospital debt charges were beyond the control of the committee. Separating all or some of these items out of the budget would show a smaller percentage increase, he said.

But Oakville Councillor Ron Planche was not convinced. He said the budget was "terribly" in excess and asked for a 1.5 per cent cut across the board. His motion was defeated.



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## Gas leak in hospital

Staff and 29 patients from the Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital were evacuated because of a gas-line leak last week.

Firefighters were called to the scene on Allan Street and the evacuation ordered at 12.15 p.m. last Tuesday (Nov. 22).

The evacuation was ordered because of the danger of an explosion of the gas.

A spokesman for firefighters said the line break was repaired in about two hours.

The evacuation was from the Helen B. Lawson wing of the Hospital. Some patients were admitted temporarily into the main building while others were granted temporary leaves of absence until the building was ready to be reoccupied.

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# Halton roads busy now but it could get worse

Drivers may find highways traversing Halton already busy, but it's going to get worse.

A recently completed regional transportation study concludes that although the automobile would remain as the dominant mode of travel in the region, people may have to put up with more congestion and lower speeds during peak hours and possibly even a more sustained peak period.

The transportation study, a 95-page document, was discussed at the regional planning committee meeting last week. Titled "Transportation in Halton: Options for 2001", it suggests some road widenings and additions but states: "The continuous provision of highway capacities to meet further vehicular demands... does not appear to be a desirable solution because of financial, physical, social and environmental constraints."

It calls on the region to promote the use of public transportation and considers alternative means of controlling transportation

demands — for example, the shortened work week. A major theme is that the various components of the transportation system and the various modes of travel be co-ordinated.

The study focuses on major transportation facilities or policies that have region-wide impacts. It is based on predictions of population and employment growth in Halton to the year 2001. Although the amount of traffic in the region is expected to increase by 50 to 80 per cent, future travel patterns are expected to remain the same. That is, there would still be a large number of trips to Hamilton and Toronto, and an increased number of trips to Peel Region, where employment opportunities are anticipated to increase by 250 per cent.

Road recommendations include the options of widening Hwy. 5, 401, 7, and the QEW; extending Hwy. 403 north-easterly from the QEW; and widening the north-south arterial roads of Guelph Line, Hwy. 25 and Trafalgar Rd.

Specifically with respect to the northern areas of the region the study recommends:

- provision of a six-lane Hwy. 401 between Hwy. 25 and Mississauga Rd.;
- a four-lane Hwy. 7 between Mountainview Rd. and the region's eastern boundary;
- a four-lane Dorval Drive from Derry Rd. to Steeles Ave. (with an interchange at Hwy. 401) and thence two-lane northwesterly to Hwy. 25. Milton Mayor Don Gordon told the committee Ontario Transportation Minister James Snow has agreed to pay for the construction of the Derry Rd. — Steeles Ave. portion of Dorval Dr., including the interchange.

Concerning public transit in the northern areas of the region, the study recommends:

- supporting the provision of commuter rail services to Milton;
- improving inter-regional transit service between Milton and Mississauga;
- improving inter-regional transit service between Halton Hills and Brampton;
- providing inter-urban bus services within the region between Milton and Georgetown;
- providing bus services between Georgetown and Acton;
- providing bus services between Milton and the major Lakeshore transit corridor (Fairview — Speers Rd. arterial route).

Cyclists and the handicapped also come in for mention. The region is recommended to undertake a study of the transportation needs of the infirm and the physically handicapped and to co-ordinate the provision of travel facilities for this sector of the public. Concerning cyclists, the report calls for the development of a bicycle path system that would serve a transportation function.

Policies contained in the draft will be included in the draft regional plan. The planning committee concluded discussion of the draft plan. It next goes to the municipalities and the public for consultation.

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## Call for phys. ed.

A program of compulsory physical education has been called for in Wellington County schools.

Such a program is underway at Torrance public school in Erin, and expansion of the program came from physical education consultant Michael Hogg.

He wants "daily, compulsory, quality physical education" from kindergarten to grade 12 in the county.

In county public schools each student gets an hour's physical education time a week, he said.

In the high schools the training ranges from none to six hours, because classes are voluntary.

Hogg linked high health-care costs to a lack of physical fitness.

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