

# Halton could use hostel for women

Halton could use a hostel for women and children, according to several area professionals whose work brings them into contact with abused wives.

The professionals, representing social agencies and the law, were members of a panel speaking at an exploratory meeting held to collect information on the need for a women's hostel in Halton. About 25 professionals and volunteers gathered at the meeting last week in Milton to hear the panel describe the plight of abused women and deserted wives. Participants were asked to volunteer for a steering committee to pursue the issue further.

Panelist John Rabeau, a social worker with Halton Regional Police, said police

answered approximately 1,000 domestic complaints in the region last year, 200 of them in the north. If a husband and wife are fighting and it comes to the point of someone having to leave, the question of who owns the home comes into play, he said. If the husband owns the home, it's the wife who has to leave. In such a case it would be beneficial to have a hostel in the area, Mr. Rabeau said. Presently, women have to go to Inasmuch House in Hamilton or to a motel for emergency shelter.

The same situation arises in the case of joint ownership, he said. In this case neither one can be asked to leave but for safety police try to talk one of the pair into going to a motel or to a relative's home.

## Accessibility crucial

Accessibility is a crucial consideration in the establishment of a hostel for women. Although Inasmuch House is available to Halton women, its Hamilton location makes it hard to reach for women from this area.

Attending a meeting concerning the location of a hostel in Halton was Rev. Marty Karl, director of Hamilton Mission Services who operate Inasmuch House. Mr. Karl told the group the Hamilton hostel was available to women on a first come, first served basis, regardless of region of residence. It has a capacity of 21 beds and, currently, there are vacancies. But he conceded the lack of geographic proximity was a problem for Halton women.

Even a hostel located in the southern part of the region would be inaccessible to women in North Halton because of the distance to travel and the lack of intraregional transportation, according to Georgetown volunteers who attended last week's session. Although they could not give figures, they told a reporter after the meeting the incidence of wife abuse was sufficient to warrant setting up a facility in one of the towns in the north.

Sheila Ward, chairman of Individual Emergency Aid for Georgetown Red Cross, handles requests for emergency shelter. The Red Cross provides for three nights motel accommodation and food in a crisis. Connie Nieuwhof, public relations officer with the Red Cross, said abused wives sometimes sign themselves into a psychiatric ward because they feel depressed and don't know where else to go. The psychiatric unit is not necessarily the appropriate place for them, she suggested.

Georgetown resident Marilyn Oldham is a volunteer with the Brampton committee for women's hostels. She said it is important to have trained volun-

teers to work with battered wives, to give emotional support and to help them look for jobs and apartments. It's best for the volunteer to be someone who has been through a similar experience and who knows the problems.

A hostel provides protection for an abused wife in a way that a hotel or motel does not. Mr. Karl said a hostel provides sympathetic care and someone to talk with. He advised the group the facility should be a house which has both private rooms and areas for socializing.

Supervision is important, Mr. Karl added. He gave the cost of staffing a hostel around the clock at \$60,000 to \$70,000 annually, exclusive of administration. Counselling can be provided by existing community agencies, he pointed out.

Mr. Karl said the hostel should be located in a house that is neither conspicuous nor anonymous. Because the women will often be brought by police, the house should have a private entrance to avoid embarrassment. "It shouldn't be in an area where it excites the neighbors," he added.

Marian Dettlor of Halton Children's Aid Society (CAS) said a hostel is a place of safety for mother and children and a place to defuse a hostile situation when the family is breaking up. When a family is splitting up it is better for the mother and children to stay together rather than to find separate accommodation for the children.

Having a readily accessible place of refuge would allow the mother time to collect her thoughts about her future. Without a hostel the pressure of finding accommodation leaves her little time or energy for long-term planning, Ms. Dettlor said.

The CAS enters the case when children under 16 are involved. A woman who has put up with abuse for some time will act when her children are threatened, Ms. Dettlor reported. Or the children or police may call the agency. Ms. Dettlor said she "doesn't buy" the excuse that children are asleep when parents fight and don't know what is happening. Sometimes the children get mixed

up in the battle and are hurt.

When the situation is a chronic one, children may identify strongly with one of the parents. This identification can lead to a son becoming a wife-beater like his father, she commented. If hostels were available for women to go to, the identification problem might be prevented.

Jane Kirkwood, a supervisor in the regional department of community and social services, said women alone have difficulty finding accommodation. She said it is not unusual for landlords to ask for a husband's co-signature on a lease. Additionally, most landlords require a month's rent in advance. In an emergency women don't have the funds and the agency cannot give them the money either.

Motel rooms, where women in such an emergency usually end up, are depressing. Welfare legislation allows \$130 month shelter allowance for an applicant and one dependent, Ms. Kirkwood

said. A motel room at \$14 a night would soon use up this amount.

Last year in the region 300 deserted wives received general welfare assistance, Ms. Kirkwood said. But the 300 are only the top of the iceberg, she added. Those not requiring financial assistance don't come to her attention. The region does not keep statistics on the number of abused wives.

If a woman decides to remain at home but lays charges against her husband, she is subject to intimidation and threats by him to drop the charges. Georgetown lawyer Tudor Beattie said if a wife who has laid an assault charge remains home, by the time the court date rolls around the charge has usually been dropped. Either the husband prevails on the wife to drop the charge or the wife changes her mind.

In the chronic situation a vicious circle is established. Just as there is a certain type of male who becomes a wife beater, there is a certain kind of female who stays around, Mr. Beattie commented. In

this instance the hostel might be a step for the woman to gain a sense of independence.

Adding her voice to the call for a hostel Gloria Hincks of Burlington Information Centre, herself a single parent, said a woman who stays in a bad marriage too long loses self respect. "It takes years to get over the rejection of feeling you're nobody," she commented from her experience and that of helping other women in the same predicament.

The steering committee generated from the meeting will continue to explore the possibility of establishing a hostel in Halton, said Barb Weaver, who was one of the women instrumental in organizing last week's meeting. Ms. Weaver is a social development officer with the Department of the Secretary of State. Part of her role is to encourage women to participate actively in their community. At a

meeting she arranged through the women's office at Sheridan College, a hostel for women was identified as an issue of concern for local women. Wheels were set in motion for last week's session and for the formation of a steering committee. Application has been made for a grant of \$750 from the Secretary of State to cover expenses of the steering committee.

Also instrumental in organizing last week's meeting were Anne Allison, Pat Cook, director of Sheridan's Women's Centre,

and Peggy Balkind, a lay advocate with the Halton Hills Community Legal Clinic. Jenny Amy of the Oakville Public Library chaired the session.

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PANEL MEMBERS exploring the issue of wife beating all supported the need for a women's hostel in Halton region. From the left are Marian Dettlor, Halton Children's Aid Society; John Rabeau, social worker with Halton Regional

Police; Jane Kirkwood, supervisor for Oakville and North Halton for the General Assistance Program; Gloria Hincks, Burlington Social Planning Council; Jenny Amy, chairman of the panel; Tudor Beattie, Georgetown lawyer.

## Domestic complaints risky business for police

Injuries to police officers are more frequently incurred during investigation of a domestic complaint than in any other line of duty, John Rabeau, a social worker with Halton Regional Police, told a meeting discussing the need for a hostel for women. He outlined some of the difficulties police face when dealing with a domestic dispute.

To enter the home in question in the first place the police must be invited in. To lay a charge of assault the police must have seen the assault take place or see evidence of it. The alternative is

for the wife to go to a justice of the peace to lay a private charge of assault.

Georgetown lawyer Tudor Beattie said anyone can lay a charge with a justice of the peace without the police being called and the matter will automatically proceed to court. However, both men agreed it takes several weeks for the matter to come to court.

Children are often caught in the middle of a fight, Mr. Rabeau said. Parents have joint custody of children and the husband may refuse to let the wife take the children with her. If the children are in

danger, police can invoke the Child Welfare Act. It authorizes police to take without warrant to a place of safety any child apparently in need of protection.

Alcohol is the major contributing problem in 50 per cent of domestic quarrels to which police are called, he said.

Turning to the legal position of women who choose to leave Mr. Beattie said the abused wife loses no theoretical legal rights by leaving home.

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### OUR READERS WRITE:

#### Egghead eggcited

Dear Sir:  
I am writing to eggpress my eggcitement at seeing your eggcellent egg portrait (front page in last week's paper). What an eggquisite picture they make standing there! What an eggclusive scoop for your eggcellent newspaper.

Let us all look forward and be ready with our eggs on January 10th, 1978. Perhaps the Eggheads' Society will eggspand. The possibilities eggghast the imagination.  
Eggclusively Yours,  
Eggscallbur Egghead  
Knox Avenue, Acton.

#### Disputes statements

January 13, 1978

The Editor,  
Dear Sir:

Last week, your paper carried an article titled "Region Should Forget Landfill Reed Claims," and for the sake of the many citizens who might otherwise be misled, I offer a few facts to clarify the true situation.

(1) The Region generates on an average 200,000 tons of waste each year.  
(2) The three operating landfill sites will be completely filled in roughly 12 to 18 months.

(3) No resource recovery plant would be able to handle all waste generated, and there will be a continuing requirement for landfill.

Twenty-four duly elected members of Regional Council have studied the situation in depth and are attempting to resolve the problem in a responsible fashion with due regard to protecting the environment and maintaining reasonable costs.

Mr. Reed's statements demonstrate a somewhat less than complete understanding of the situation which is being faced by the elected representatives of Halton Region.

The type of system referred to by Mr. Reed which produces steam is presently in operation in Montreal and the capital cost estimates for a similar type facility for Halton could be in the neighborhood of \$40-

60 million. This level of expenditure would produce very large increases in property taxes.

I suggest this may be one reason Mr. Reed declines to refer to costs in his statements.

I would welcome Mr. Reed's positive participation in the Region's efforts to provide a solution to the waste disposal problem. In that regard, Mr. Reed is aware that on February 1, at 9 a.m., the Regional Council will be receiving a status report on landfill and resource recovery as it pertains to Halton. He will learn, among other facts, that Halton Council was the first Region to approve, in principle, entering into an agreement with the Ministry of the Environment for provision of a front-end refuse derived fuel (R.D.F.) type resource recovery plant, that \$6,550,000 has been included in the five year capital forecast and further, the Draft Official Plan for the Region demonstrates the Region's commitment to resource recovery.

This entire problem is extremely complex; there are no simple solutions. Large capital investments must be made, and the Region intends to proceed with caution and diligence and will not be pressured into haste which could result in an unsound decision.

Sincerely,

R. B. Morrow,  
Regional Chairman.

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