



It's been a busy year for the staff at the Halton Hills Legal Clinic. Besides their usual workload, there was a move to their Mill Street headquarters. Seen here is Legal Clinic

Director and Staff Lawyer David Craig with (back row, left to right) June Wilde and Karen Thompson-Harry. Absent is Jack Fleming and Kimberley Ellerby. (Herald photo)

## Legal worker Karen selected to study our welfare system

There's a lot that's wrong with the provincial system of social assistance, and Karen Thompson-Harry of the Halton Hills Legal Clinic will be pointing them out.

The community legal worker has been hired as advocate for Ontario's 56 legal clinics to represent them on a social assistance review committee recently set up by the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Over the next six months, Mrs. Thompson-Harry will be sharing her knowledge of the welfare system with members of this social assistance review committee.

Its purpose is to review the province's social assistance system and propose a new system.

The committee will be travelling across the province and holding public hearings. Mrs. Thompson-Harry will travel with them from the end of October to early January, going to eight of the 14 public hearings.

The mother of one will be travelling to Windsor, Ottawa, Cambridge, Timmons, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Toronto and London.

"One of the things I'll be doing is coming up with a working paper for our clinics. As the staff person, I'll be drafting it for us all," Mrs. Thompson-Harry said. "I'll be travelling around a fair amount, listening to the briefs and getting ideas of local problems."

When she's not on the road, Mrs. Thompson-Harry will be working out of her Georgetown office. Another community legal worker has been hired from the Mississauga Legal Clinic to fill in for Karen during the six months of the committee work. Her name is Darleen Baker.

The 12-member review committee is headed by George Thomson, a former family court judge and assistant deputy minister of the Ministry

of Community and Social Services. This is the first review of the social assistance program since the welfare system was proclaimed in 1958, and the Family Benefits Act in 1967.

"There are a lot of inequities in the current system," Mrs. Thompson-Harry said. "We hope this isn't a means (by the Ministry) to pacify the clinics and pressure groups."

She realizes any changes that are recommended by the review committee will take several years to come about, if at all.

"I've been working on this so long now that I'd really want to see some changes made and would want to be involved in the setting up of a different system," Mrs. Thompson-Harry said. Welfare appeals and a few human rights and workmen's compensation cases have been her area of specialization at the legal clinic.

## Stewarttown enrolment figures wrong

Figures from Halton Region's medical officer of health were not accurate.

The Herald quoted from a report last week about Stewarttown Senior Public School being allowed to open with nearly three times as many students.

However, in June of 1986 there were 332 students at Stewarttown. In September 1986, there were 409 students enrolled, an increase of 77 students, said Halton Board of Education trustee Dick Howitt.

## Hit parked car

A Georgetown woman impaired by valium and Tylenol crashed her vehicle into a parked car Friday at 10:15 p.m. She was eastbound on Mill Street at Elgin Street in Georgetown and was turning into the curb lane when she swerved and hit the rear of a parked car, police said. She fled from the scene, police said.

## Legal clinic staff swamped with work

One word best describes the work at the Halton Hills Legal Clinic last year: busy.

Moving to a new location on Mill Street in Georgetown kept both staff and board members busy, said Director and Staff Lawyer David Craig.

This is the first year a written report wasn't prepared for the directors, Mr. Craig said. There just wasn't time.

Mr. Craig spoke about the "increased sophistication" of the board of directors. The board is working toward more long range goals and objectives for the Legal Clinic, he said.

On an individual basis, Karen Thompson-Harry has had a very

heavy caseload, especially in the area of welfare appeals.

The community legal worker has talked to lawyers about her field of expertise and also organized a conference for other clinics on "advocacy in welfare law," he said.

Staff Lawyer Jack Fleming has worked on getting the property standards bylaw expanded to homes which aren't in the downtown areas of Halton Hills. His day to day casework representing tenants has been very good, he said.

Mr. Craig said a lot of his own time has been devoted to a test case on pensions. Eight weeks of evidence has been presented and the final submission will be made in October, he said.

The test case challenges the use of a rating schedule which calculates how much pension an injured worker would receive after an injury.

For example, if a worker has hurt his back, is middle-aged, does manual labor, and does not speak English as a first language, his opportunities for finding another job aren't as good as if his circumstances were different, Mr. Craig said.

"You have to assess the person's disability at the full extent," he said, not always by awarding a set 15-20 per cent pension for a low back injury.

Mr. Craig also said he had been kept busy training people at other clinics in the area of compensation law and teaching seminars for the Law Society of Upper Canada. Besides that, he's had about 40-odd projects on the go, the lawyer said.

## No early registrations

It's now possible to spend more time working as a director at the Halton Hills Community Legal Clinic.

At the legal clinic's annual general meeting Sept. 30 the directors voted to change the term of office. Previously a director could be eligible for two three-year terms. Then, a director would have to vacate his seat for a year before seeking a nomination again.

Now, directors will be eligible for three terms of office consisting of a total of nine years.

## Walk against drug addiction

A "Walk Against Drugs" is being sponsored by the Drug Abuse Committee of Halton Hills Oct. 18.

Monday night, Halton Hills councillors said they had no objection to the walk which is to begin at the Burger King on Guelph Street at 10 a.m. and end up at the town offices on Trafalgar Road.

Walkers are to walk on the sidewalks and shoulders of the road and will be supervised by Drug Abuse Committee members and other adults, Committee member Robert Stewart said in his letter to council.

## Traffic not heavy enough for lights

Traffic isn't heavy enough to warrant traffic lights at two town intersections: Delrex Boulevard and Guelph Street in Georgetown and Churchill Road and Queen Street in Acton.

Town Engineer Bob Austin broke the news to councillors Monday night, telling them he doesn't think it will be too long before these intersections will require lights.

The Ministry of Transportation and Communications provides funding for the installation and maintenance of traffic signals through a "Connection Link" program.

Traffic studies are done annually in May or September to see if traffic has changed.

Coun. Lillian Bowman said she used to drive through the Delrex and Guelph intersection until making a left turn from Delrex became too difficult. Although more circuitous, she now uses alternate routes. Coun. Betty Fisher said she makes a right turn then makes a detour through the Georgetown Motor Inn parking lot to head back to Georgetown.

Mr. Austin said traffic has dropped off by three per cent over last year at that corner.

## Got a gripe?

If you have some gripes or suggestions on how the welfare system can be improved, you're invited to get in touch with the Halton Legal Clinic.

The clinic will help you put together a brief to be heard and received by the newly formed social assistance review committee.

The committee will be hearing presentations in Hamilton Dec. 12 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. No location for the public hearing has been announced yet.

If you want to make a presentation on that day, you have to phone the review committee and get slotted in.

Community agencies and past and present recipients are invited to contact the clinic to have their say. The clinic is located in the former Roxy building on Mill Street in Georgetown. The phone number is 877-5256.

## New facility for clinic

It's nice to be able to meet in the new Halton Hills Legal Clinic facility, said Chairman of the Board John Nicholas.

He was speaking at the legal clinic's annual general meeting Sept. 30. There are no stairs in their new Mill Street location and the facility is accessible to the disabled, he said.

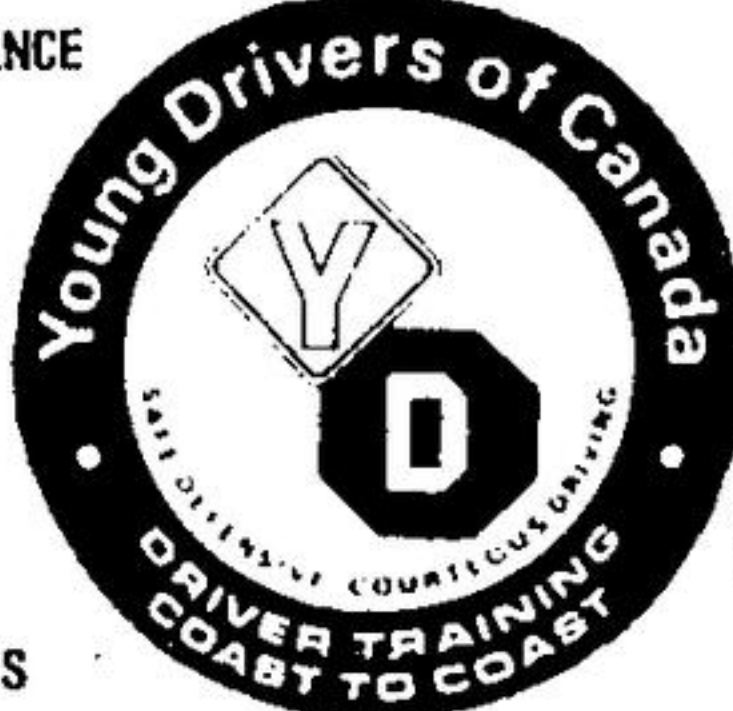
The chairman commended the board and staff who worked hard making things ready for the June 4 opening of the new facility on 72 Mill Street.

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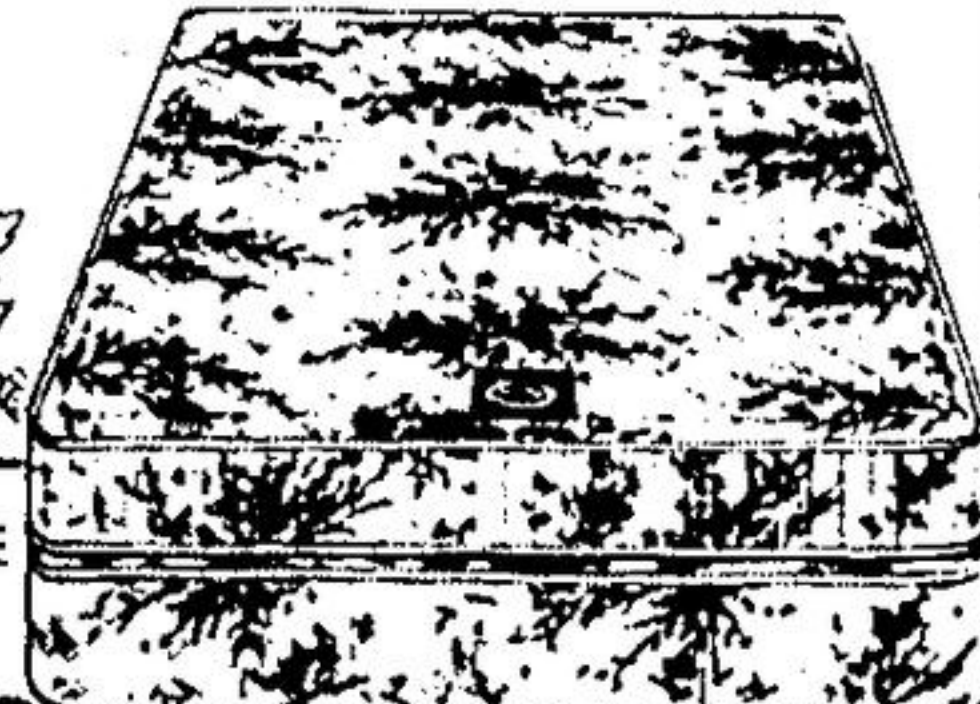
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