

## Council reluctantly approves hiring additional welfare case workers

Only after a lengthy debate did Halton Regional Council Wednesday approve the hiring of 10 extra staff members to handle the increase in General Assistance Welfare caseloads in the Region.

Halton Social Services Commissioner Bonnie Ewart told Regional Council that without the additional employees each current staff member would be required to manage 180 to 190 welfare cases.

A manageable number of cases per staff member is 115, said Ms. Ewart. According to a staff report, Regional Social Services staff have had to handle 76.3 per cent more cases between January and May of 1991 over the same period in 1990.

Several Regional Councillors were reluctant to approve the additional staff members because the province has yet to indicate if it will provide funding for the extra hiring. Ms. Ewart predicted

the provincial money would probably be forthcoming.

Oakville Regional Councillor Kevin Flynn, who opposed the hiring, said "this is a perfect chance for council to say not the province."

He was referring to the fact the General Welfare Assistance Program was imposed on municipalities by the province. In this sense the province should be required to supply some of the funding to administer the program, he said.

Coun. Flynn also explained by not hiring the extra staff, the province will receive a message that it is not doing enough to help people get off welfare.

Halton Hills Coun. Joe Hewitt agreed with Coun. Flynn, saying not hiring the staff would force the province to improve the system.

Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale countered explaining Regional

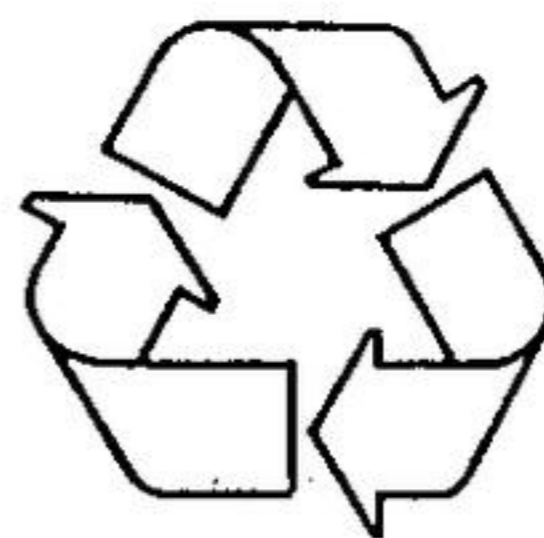
staff will burn out if the additional staff isn't hired.

The rise in welfare cases is tied to the recession and it's a reality with which the Region must deal, said Mayor Mulvale.

"We're not hiring the staff to solicit more welfare recipients," she added.

Burlington Regional Coun. Ralph Scholtena said the additional staff should be hired because the issue centres on "flesh and blood." The process must be handled properly otherwise single women, children and the less fortunate will suffer, said the councillor.

A recorded vote was taken in connection with additional staff being hired and Halton Hills Regional councillors Pam Johnston and Rick Bonnette supported the staff being hired. Regional Councillors Joe Hewitt and Marilyn Serjeantson opposed the extra staff.



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