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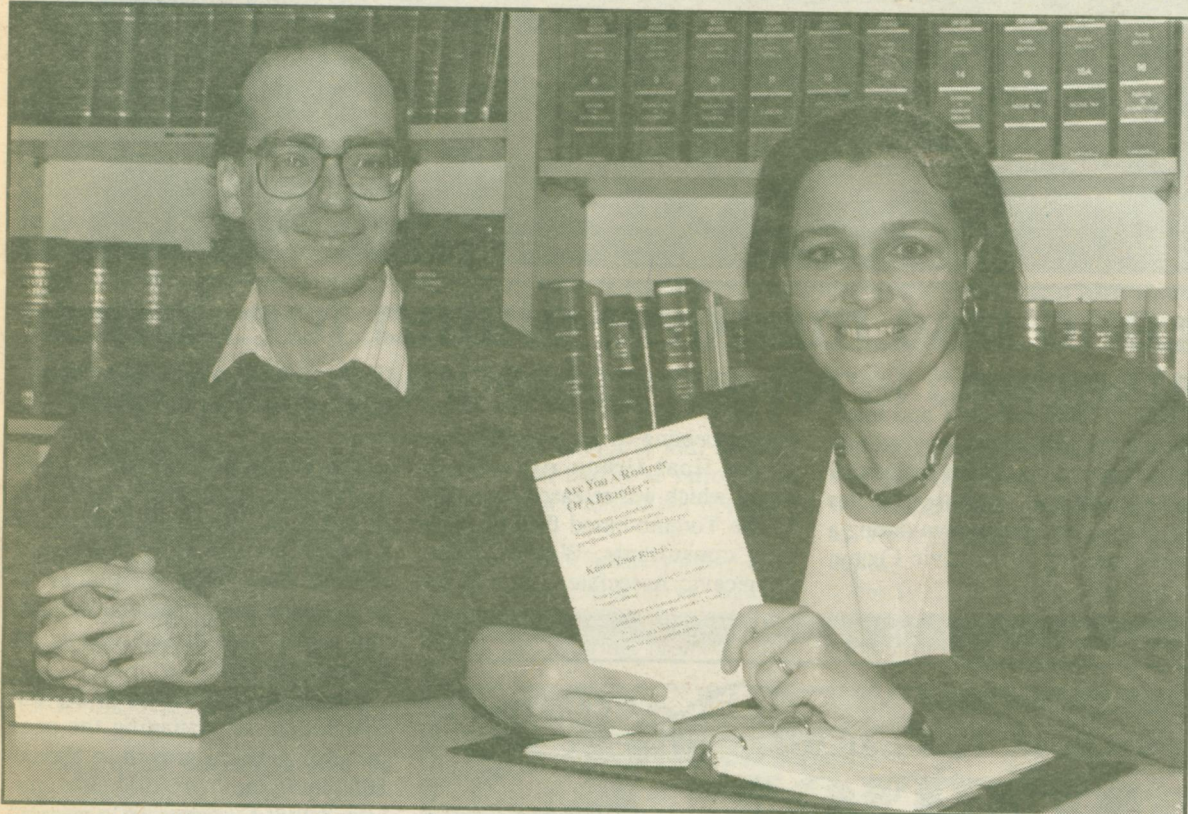


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Lawyers Jeff Steinberg and Marilyn King staff the Halton Hills Community Legal Clinic, an "access to justice" for low-income citizens that meet the criteria. The clinic serves all of Halton.

Photo by Wendy Long

Local legal clinic serves Halton Region

By Wendy Long

If your landlord suddenly kicked you out and changed the locks, what would you do? Is this legal? What if you're not sure? Where would you go if you couldn't afford legal fees?

If you're a Halton resident, you could approach the Halton Hills Community Legal Clinic, which is considered an access to justice for low-income citizens.

The clinic is staffed by lawyers Marilyn King and Jeff Steinberg, and community legal worker Caroline Thompson. As well, there are two support staff.

"People were lacking in advice

and representation...they really didn't have fair access to the legal system," King said.

"The highest percentage of calls are from tenants," said King. "By and large tenants' rights is the one area people have the most questions and problems with."

"A landlord can't just change the locks. They have to formally apply to court and follow a procedure. We teach [the public] how to represent themselves in a process that assumes they can do that," King said.

Clinic callers also seek information and help with welfare, family benefits, workers compensation, Canada Pension Plan or Unemployment Insurance. The clinic does not deal in criminal and family law.

The clinic is located in Georgetown but services many Halton residents that meet the financial criteria. Presently the clinic's volunteer Board of Directors is looking into a name change so that the area of service is not misunderstood.

The Halton Hills Community Legal Clinic began humbly in the fall of 1977 in the basement of Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown. Originally there were only two legal workers until eventually a lawyer was added.

King and Steinberg will often

talk to senior high school students (or other groups) to make them aware of their legal rights and obligations and put them in a better position to avoid negative legal situations when they take an independent place in society.

"We also participate in law reform," King said, citing as an example the reform of an Oakville bylaw on standards of repair in rental properties.

King and Steinberg estimate that they received approximately 250 calls in October, although "it really fluctuates a lot," Steinberg said.

Do King and Steinberg see abuse of the social support system?

"Some people would rather lose their house than apply for welfare because they think there's a stigma in doing that," King said.

King and Steinberg said they have dealt with all ages from all walks of life, and haven't seen people on welfare that didn't meet the criteria.

"We'd like people to know that we're here and that we can provide advice in those areas that we practise in. We think it's important for people to know their rights and to know their obligations so they're better able to deal with their life circumstances."

For more information about the clinic call 877-5256.

Downtown remains economically viable

By Dianne Cornish

"We're alive and well," downtown businesswoman Mary-Ellen Stephens said Monday while commenting on Georgetown's business improvement area and the "misconception" that the downtown core is dying.

Stephens, who is also vice-president of the Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area (BIA), was responding to what she and other local business people view as a misleading headline that appeared on a story published last week in a Toronto newspaper. "Merchants say Georgetown's core dying" was the headline which drew criticism and denial from Stephens and BIA manager Margaret Vint, who called a press conference Monday at the BIA office on Mill Street.

While acknowledging that there are vacant storefronts on Main Street and there's a need to develop "new customer bases" to augment "established customer bases", Stephens firmly stated, "We're not dying down here."

"We've had some tough times, like any other area," Vint said, arguing that changes downtown, including the leaving of some businesses and their replacement by others, is part of an "evolution."

According to information compiled by Vint, 11 stores have been vacated in downtown Georgetown

during 1992. Four of these have been filled with other businesses, one will be occupied in January, another has been targeted as the possible location of a residential/commercial development and the remaining five continue to sit vacant.

On the other side of the ledger, the downtown has seen 13 new businesses locate in downtown Georgetown this year. Four existing businesses expanded this year, including Young's Pharmacy which is now housed at the former Bi-Way location. Bi-Way moved from Main Street to a shopping centre opposite Georgetown's new indoor mall on Guelph Street.

"We were sorry to see Bi-Way go, but Young's is in there now and expanding," Vint said.

"Most of our retail vacancies over the year have been filled," Stephens emphasized. She and Vint also noted that there are several established businesses in the downtown core that "have been there for a long time."

While much of Georgetown's recent residential development has taken place in Georgetown South near the new mall, the BIA isn't discouraged but has chosen instead to be more proactive in its approach, Stephens said. It plans to reach out to those new residents

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Man charged after officers assaulted, cruiser damaged

An Acton man has been charged with a host of offenses after a pair of Halton Regional Police officers were attacked and a police cruiser was damaged.

According to an 11 Division spokesman, the man was leaving a Mill St., Acton tavern with his step-father at about 10:30 p.m. Saturday, when the pair became involved in an argument. The dispute escalated and the man began punching his 44-year-old step-father. The assault continued as the man put the Church St., Acton victim in a head lock and "rammed his head into the (tavern's) brick wall."

The pair were observed by a passerby who called police.

Before police arrived the man grabbed the victim and "slammed his head into the sidewalk," police

said. When police arrive, the suspect was waving his arm around yelling at the victim.

Cst. Kathy Lefroy approached
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Christmas Carol Book now available

Look for our first ever Christmas Carol Book in today's Halton Hills This Week. The book filled with greetings and carols is being circulated to 20,000 homes in Halton Hills but some extra copies of this special book are available by calling 873-2254 ask for Marie. We hope you enjoy it.

Pomeroy wants MVA re-examined

Halton Region Chairman Peter Pomeroy will ask Wednesday for a reconsideration of Market Value Assessment.

It was announced over the weekend that Pomeroy will ask for another look at the controversial tax reform at special meeting of Halton Regional Council Wednesday.

Pomeroy cast the deciding vote on the tax proposal in September.

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