



Georgetown Marketplace contributes to local schools

Georgetown Marketplace manager Herminia Henderson presents cheques to school principals Treena Sybersma of Georgetown District Christian School, Grant Clatworthy of Harrison Public School and Mary Lyons of Glen Williams Public School. Each school won \$1,000 in the mall's Cash for Class contest.

Photo by Herb Garbutt

Subsidized day care frozen as lists grow

Heightened demand has bloated Halton's subsidized child care waiting list by more than 209 per cent over the last year, and with its budget almost exhausted, a temporary subsidy freeze has been enacted.

That means only crisis or emergency requests will be considered, at least until the coffers are replenished, said HaltonRegion's commissioner of social and community services Adelina Urbanski told Halton Region's social and community services committee.

In 1999, almost \$6 million was allocated to subsidize the care of 1,350 Halton kids.

And another \$1.1 million was added to cope with the needs of the Ontario Works program.

That has allowed parents finding a job under Ontario Works to receive automatic subsidized child care.

But the vastly pumped-up demand means the region's waiting list has been steadily lengthening over the course of the year,

with the longest wait being for infant and preschool care.

And the lists are especially long in south Halton, which has experienced considerable growth in the past year. Oakville list has 126, up from 35 last year. In Burlington, the list has grown from 68 in 1998 to 174.

'People need subsidized child care just to participate in the job market.'

—Adelina Urbanski
region commissioner of
social and community services

Milton has also seen an increase, from seven to 38, while Halton Hills has grown from nine to 30, for a Halton total of 368 from September 1998 to September 1999.

In the past two months, the list has grown to 451, making the situ-

ation even more grim for parents in need of subsidized child care.

And the numbers are expected to keep rising, said Urbanski.

"The numbers are telling us just what we expected all along," she said. "People need subsidized child care just to participate in the job market."

The report was before committee for information only.

But it had Burlington Councillor Linda Schreiber wondering why new moms on social assistance are being pushed back to work so quickly after pregnancy while women on employment insurance (EI) are seeing their maternity benefits extended.

"Why are the poor women being pushed back to work and those on EI being able to stay home for a year," she asked.

The reason is that the policy decisions are made by two different levels of government who don't confer with one another, said Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale.

—By Irene Gentle, special

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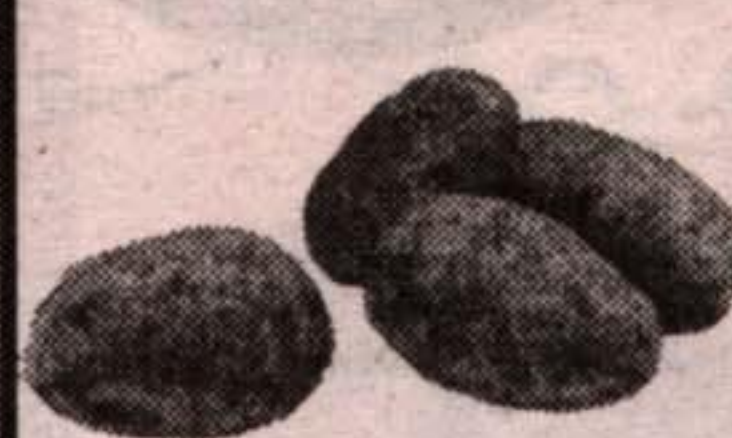
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