

Shelter for abused wives

# Halton needs hostel for women

By Olga Darcovich  
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. Marian Detlor 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. Detlor 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. Detlor reported. Or the children or police may call the agency, Ms. Detlor 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 tip 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,



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 Detlor, 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.

## Checking domestic complaint 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. The situation where police lay the charge is governed by the Criminal Code and, in this case, it is the state or the crown which prosecutes the accused. The victim is expected to give evidence, Mr. Beattie explained. In a serious matter, such as a shooting, the crown can force the matter to proceed even though the victim may wish to have the charges dropped.

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.

her personal belongings the woman has to go to court to get them. If she is joint owner of the house, she has to go to court for a settlement.

Unfortunately, the way the law is currently set up the questions of custody, possession of the home, and money payments cannot be dealt with at the same time in the same court, he said.

Another tactic the abused wife who stays at home can use is to have her husband issued with an order to keep the peace. It requires him to keep the peace for 12 months and does give the court some jurisdiction in the matter, Mr. Beattie said.

where the situation is one of physical abuse Mr. Beattie advises women to leave the home as quickly and as surreptitiously as possible, taking the children and all the belongings to which they feel they are entitled. If she leaves without the children or

children she has to go to court to get them. If she is joint owner of the house, she has to go to court for a settlement.

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REGISTRATION: Register in person at Milton High School on the starting date of each class.

Between the time of printing and the first night some classes may be filled. You are advised to call the Adult Education office, 335-3663, to check on registration.

THE FOLLOWING CLASSES STILL HAVE ROOM FOR ADDITIONAL REGISTRATIONS:

COURSE	NIGHT	TIME	WKS.	FEE
Auto Maintenance (Women)	Mon. Jan. 16	7:00-10:00	8	\$25
Bookkeeping for a Sm. Business	Mon. Jan. 16	7:00-10:00	8	\$20
Bridge	Tue. Jan. 17	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Brush Up Typing Skills	Mon. Jan. 16	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Ceramics	Tue. Jan. 17	7:30-9:30	8	\$20
Community Theatre for Adults	Tue. Jan. 17	7:00-10:00	8	\$22
Creative Needlework	Mon. Jan. 16	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Drawing & Sketching	Wed. Jan. 18	7:00-10:00	8	\$20
Fitness & Recreation	Mon. Jan. 16	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
French for Beginners	Wed. Jan. 18	7:30-9:30	15	\$22
Furniture Refinishing	Tue. Jan. 17	7:00-10:00	8	\$23
Guitar	Mon. Jan. 16	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Macrame	Tue. Jan. 17	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Metalwork	Mon. Jan. 16	7:00-10:00	8	\$26
Painting: Water & Acrylics	Mon. Jan. 16	7:00-10:00	8	\$20
Photography	Tue. Jan. 17	7:30-9:30	8	\$13
Typing: Beginners	Mon. Jan. 16	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Wool (Rug) Hooking	Tue. Jan. 17	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Yoga: Beginners	Mon. Jan. 16	7:30-9:30	8	\$12
Yoga: Intermediate	Tue. Jan. 17	7:30-9:30	8	\$12

NOTE: Some shop courses cost considerably more than the regular fees. Extra fees have been charged to cover the cost of consumable supplies. Students are expected to provide their own materials where applicable, e.g. Craft classes, Painting, Furniture Refinishing, etc. Ceramics students will buy their supplies directly from the instructor.

**ENGLISH FOR NEW CANADIANS**

Persons wishing instruction in English (New Canadians or others who wish to improve their spoken and written English) may enrol at Milton District High School on any Wednesday, from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Fee for the course is \$5.00.

IF SUFFICIENT REGISTRATION IS RECEIVED, THE CLASS WILL START ON THE DATE INDICATED. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CANCEL CLASSES THAT DO NOT RECEIVE SUFFICIENT REGISTRATION.

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