

Child services committee has effective first year

By Olga Darcovich
One year ago representatives of community agencies which serve children in Halton joined forces to keep tabs on and respond to the reorganization of children's services initiated by the provincial government.

return some administrative responsibility for services to children back to the community and to make changes in legislation concerning the welfare of children.



JOHN RABEAU, a social worker with Halton police, chaired the Halton Children's Services Steering Committee during its first year.

This fall, the group can look back on a productive year in which voluntary co-ordination of services at the local level has begun and some important issues concerning care to children tackled.

According to John Rabeau, chairman of Children's Services Steering Committee, as the group is called, the group has been "very effective" not only in getting together the large number of people involved in delivering services in Halton, but in getting them to come together in a regional point of view over prospective programs.

Last summer the responsibility for various services to children, formerly scattered throughout several ministries, was brought under one umbrella, the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

At the same time, the province announced its intent to

To gain a better understanding of all these changes and their implications, Halton Youth Services Network sponsored a meeting in July of last year with Judge George Thomson, Associate Deputy Minister of Community and Social Services.

Out of this meeting the steering committee was formed as a response to Judge Thomson's indication that consultation groups were needed in the community, Mr. Rabeau explained in a recent interview.

The committee has a floating membership—about 60 people currently belong. Most of these represent agencies in Halton serving children. The Children's Aid Society and the Children's Assessment and Treatment Centre are two examples of such agencies.

A few interested citizens have joined as well. Walter Mulkevic, chairman of the Regional Community and Social Services Committee, represents the region. But anybody is welcome to

attend and become involved, stressed Mr. Rabeau, a social worker with Halton Police. "It's an open-ended committee."

Because of the province's intent to decentralize administration of children's services, the committee took as its main focus the obligation to try to formulate a model for managing children's services in the region.

Basic to the model is the development of a body of local people who would take on the administrative task.

By next year the steering committee, in consultation with Regional Council, will have drawn up a model for presentation to Queen's Park, Mr. Rabeau anticipates. The committee is in liaison with the region through Chief Administrative Officer Ernie Reid.

Although members of the committee are in agreement with the principle of local co-ordination, they are concerned about how the changes will be implemented, Mr. Rabeau said.

Two major issues—the division of funding between province and municipality, and the standards of care—have not yet been resolved by

the Ministry. Lack of definite information about these two areas hampers planning, he pointed out, and was the reason the Halton group did not apply for Halton to be one of the test sites for pilot projects on local children's committees.

The province has stated it intends the community to assume at least some of the cost of services to children in

its area, but has not expanded on cost-sharing arrangements.

The provincial tax base is income while the region's is property. Although both sources of revenue are the taxpayers' pockets, the two methods of collecting money for financing social programs have different implications.

According to Mr. Rabeau, taxation of property doesn't take into account people's ability to pay. He is concerned taxpayers will not look favorably on an increase in the property tax base to pay for children's services. "The need for social services, not only for children but for anyone, is very difficult to sell," he explained.

The general view is that people with problems are responsible for their condition but that isn't always the case, he continued, citing the example of children who suffer from learning disabilities.

Social services are confidential and therefore invisible to the public who,

consequently, fail to see the need for them.

Agency staff, on the other hand, is dealing with social problems day in and day out and say Halton is underserved. Facilities for emotionally disturbed children, for instance, are minimal in North Halton and in Oakville and children requiring treatment have to be sent hundreds of miles away from home, Mr. Rabeau said.

Another concern of local agencies is whether their autonomy will be affected. At present, the private boards of these agencies set policies. If this authority is taken over by the local co-ordinating body which will one day be established, local agencies will lose autonomy and control over their own destinies, he predicted.

Asked how much clout the steering committee could have with the province, Mr. Rabeau replied it can be an effective lobby in dealing with the province from a regional point of view.

Large part of police work concerns social problems

When he was a front line worker with the police force, there was very little distinction between the work he did and the work police officers did, social worker John Rabeau recalled in a recent interview. The major part of the activities carried out by officers in the youth section of the force really fall into the category of social work, he said.

Starting six years ago with the Youth and Family Services Division of what was then the Burlington force Mr. Rabeau, the only social worker on the Halton Police Force, now splits his time among three roles: recruitment, community outreach and co-ordination of youth and family services divisions.

But the first four and a half years on the force, Mr. Rabeau dealt with all juveniles in contact with police and was also involved in domestic situations (family fights, neighbor disputes), attempted suicides, missing persons — "anything with social implications."

He went with police to answer calls and rotated through different shifts along with the officers.

His role was to identify the underlying social problems that led to the situation requiring police intervention.

"Police are front line social workers. They're in a position to identify problems and make referrals," he commented adding if that follow-through isn't done, the problem recurs.

Some police forces, like the

one in New York City, have a specially-trained squad which handles domestic disputes. But generally, police receive minimal training in dealing with social problems.

In contrast to the large portion — 80 per cent — of police work that deals with non-criminal offences, a small portion — roughly five per cent — of the education a police officer receives at police college is devoted to social problems. Officers are left to develop skills in handling these by experience. Some pick up the requisite skills better than others. The consequence is that a lot of people who could use help, don't get it.

On the other hand, Mr. Rabeau pointed out, having a social worker on the force to deal with social problems can be considered a frill. "It's a great service, but there's the question of cost."

"Police have no mandate to do that sort of thing. The argument can be made that those types of problems can be dealt with more appropriately by other social agencies in the community."

When a police force is

understaffed, priority is given to crime prevention and control, and the so-called "frills" fall by the wayside, he said.

In one of his current roles, that of co-ordinator of youth and family service divisions in the Halton police network, Mr. Rabeau hopes to develop a training program for officers working with youth.

In his personnel capacity, he is primarily involved in helping to assess prospective civilian employees of the force.

Not least, Mr. Rabeau represents the force on a number of community boards and committees. In this context he joined Halton Children's Services Steering Committee where he has served as chairman for the past year.

Town favors auto plant

Halton Hills planning board paid little heed to objections from the Town of Milton, Halton regional planners and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, this week, when they approved in principle an automobile reconditioning plant on Steele's Avenue, near the Fourth Line. The land backs on to Highway 401.

The Ministry of Agriculture objected to the further loss of prime agricultural land while Milton claimed the industrial zoning would be an intrusion into a rural area, and would have a negative impact on lands in both Milton and Halton Hills.

The Milton resolution, termed "sour grapes" by Chairman Roy Booth, went on to say the proposal would conflict with the control on industrially designated land across the boundary in Milton, and claimed it could endanger approval of Milton's 1390 acre industrial park nearby.

Arndt-Palmer International Inc. is seeking the rezoning of the 53 acres for the painting and reconditioning of leased cars for Chrysler Canada Ltd. A 20,000 square foot plant, employing 30 people to start will be built, and a large outside storage area will be maintained.

When the leased nearly new cars are reconditioned they are auctioned to dealers.

In his report, planner Brian Kropf said the proposal has merit and warrants favorable consideration. He said as far as he knew it would be a dry industry and would be developed to a high standard as a prestige use. He emphasized Arndt-Palmer would have to endorse these two statements before final approval is given.

The report also called for extensive landscape buffering from any adjacent properties and from Steele's Avenue, and Highway 401.

More detailed engineering studies will be required, and land for road widening will be required by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

Halton Regional Health Unit is doubtful if wells in the area would supply the volume of water required, since the Arndt-Palmer plant in Scarborough where 10 to 15 cars are processed per day has

used 170,500 gallons in the last four months. The water is used for washing cars.

The Health Unit said the car wash water will present a difficult disposal problem, and would come under the Ministry of Environment.

Sharon Johnston, Regional Planner, questioned the need for further removal of prime agricultural land, in view of the proximity of Milton's industrial land said it contravenes the draft Official plan for the region.

A report from W. D. Sargent, Chief Building

Inspector and Zoning Administrator, he stated the volume of traffic on Highway 401 would lessen the possibility of residential growth in the area. He said the extension of industrial designation would be logical since the south side of Highway 401 in Milton is proposed industrial.

He pointed out the need for industrial assessment, and said it would seem a worthwhile proposal, assuming the industry could provide adequately for its own water and sewage disposal facilities.



BELL CANADA EMPLOYEES were hard at work these past few weeks finishing laying telephone cable on parts of Martin St. and Woodward Ave. From left, Eddie Bravo, Sabino Conceicao, and Gabriel Coroa dig up the real estate on Woodward Ave. preparatory to the laying of the cable. The workers were scheduled to have finished the project yesterday.

Junior champion from Dixon farm

High quality breeding was evident among the 157 Holsteins shown by 57 exhibitors on Friday, Oct. 6 at the West-Central Ontario Championship Holstein Show in Erin. Top animals from the area covered by the 10 counties East of Oxford and West of York competed for district honors.

Visitors from China were among the large interested ringside. Earl Woodrow, Beeton judged this Show.

Claude F. Pickett, Georgetown had two first placers. One was his three-year-old, Norsdale Nelle Roxanne and the other his Senior Yearling Pickland Ivanhoe Crystal. George E. Dixon, Georgetown won Junior Champion on his Apache Citation. Stylemaster daughter, Mardix Jamie Stylemaster. This dairy, clean Junior Yearling was declared Junior Champion over the first prize 'Unique' Heifer Calf, Allangrove Unique Carol shown by M.D. Wingrove, Campbellville. Wingrove also topped the Junior Heifer Calf class with an Allangrove Ventura daughter.

The Champion Male was Spring Hedge Phoenix. This Puget Sound Highmark son

placed first in the Bull Calf class for owners Bertram Stewart, Hornby and Harry Moore, Terra Cotta.

First in the Yearling Bull class (2) was Indian Garden Joel owned by Indian Garden Farm, Acton.

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