

# Workfare is not meeting the projected numbers

By BRAD REAUME  
The Champion

Halton Region has established 90 workfare positions but only 34 people are currently enrolled in the program, far below projections.

Members of the Region's health and social services committee were recently provided details of the slower than expected implementation of workfare.

"We have overcome the instant and initial negative image of these programs," said Bonnie Ewart, commissioner of social services. "We are setting up placements faster than we are getting clients to fill them."

Ms Ewart said having the extra placements available is advantageous because it allows those

in the program to be matched to the type of work for which they are suited. Committee members heard that Ms Ewart had expected about 260 individuals would be involved at this time with positions in non-profit or public organizations or employment through agency referrals. Burlington Councillor Bob Wood, who has stood firmly against workfare from the beginning, questioned if the program would ever fulfill those expectations.

Ms Ewart said another year should provide a clearer picture. She added the four-month waiting period before eligibility is slowing down potential matches, as are a number of other administrative procedures. Mr. Wood suggested that projected participation in the program would always be a guessing game.

Janet Menard, a social services manager for

Halton Region, said many of the current workfare positions are with Halton Region. She added that a third party has been hired by about 15 municipal governments to independently evaluate the program.

"Halton Region has taken the lead on making this a more workable program," said Halton Chair Joyce Savoline. "It's still in its infancy. We have to constantly try to make it better. We are dealing with people's lives."

Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale said the new Labour government in the United Kingdom has introduced a youth program which mirrors Ontario Works.

But "We are nowhere near where we said the numbers would be," said Mr. Wood. "There is not much to be pleased with."



Bonnie Ewart

## Citizens to size up council pay

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It is perhaps the most difficult job elected people have to perform.

So Halton Region's administration and finance committee agreed to let citizen appointees do it for them.

The citizen's committee, of between four and eight members, will recommend how much regional council members should be paid in the next term of office. Local councils face election for three year terms in November, 1997.

Regional council has the final say and can adopt or dismiss the committee's recommendations.

Currently Halton councillors make \$18,705 per year with one third of it tax free. Ms. Savoline is paid \$71,226. Councillors have not had a pay increase since 1992.

Ms Savoline is a fulltime regional employee for her term of elected office.

Regional councillors are part-timers, and get the \$18,705 in addition to whatever sum they are paid to sit on their local councils, also a part-time position.

In Milton, local councillors are paid approximately \$11,000.

There is a move afoot by the provincial government to remove the tax free provision for municipal councillors. In addition, Halton council will consider the pay of councillors in other Ontario municipalities.

The debate on council pay is expected to take place in September.



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