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Bonnie Ewart

Workfare initiative 'doomed' from start says private partner

By **KAREN SMITH**
The Champion

The job-finding component of Halton's workfare program was "doomed from the beginning," a private sector partner told regional officials Tuesday.

Jim Giddens of the Steady Force employment agency — one of two firms contracted by Halton Region to find jobs for welfare recipients — said most of the 42 welfare recipients referred to him didn't

know how to conduct themselves in a job interview or prepare a resume.

"I'm totally frustrated," he told members of the regional health and social services committee.

"Nobody had worked with them and helped them and that was supposed to happen."

Mr. Giddens said to top it all off he has had no contact from the Region about the program since August.

His comments came shortly before the committee was to hear a workfare progress report by Bonnie Ewart, Halton's commissioner of community and social services, who was more optimistic about the program.

"We're very satisfied with the progress we've made in the first year" of the program. We've got a long way to go and I think we've had a good first year."

However, the report showed that in the first year of the program only nine welfare recipients found work through the job-finding component. The projected number was 330.

Yet, another 32 people found employment after serving as volunteers in a community placement program. But only 104 people took part in the volunteer segment, which had an annual target of 315.

Ms Ewart couldn't give an answer to Burlington Councillor Jack Dennison, who asked her point-blank why the prospective employees weren't trained.

"I haven't got an answer for that. It could be an individual problem," she said.

She apologized to Mr. Giddens for any lack of communication and said there was no intent to cause ill-feeling.

The committee voted to request a staff report to look into Mr. Giddens' complaints.

Teens charged for pellet shots

A pair of 15-year-old Milton males face weapon charges after a man was struck with two shots from a pellet gun at Ontario Street and Derry Road Tuesday.

The 46-year-old Strabane, Ont. man was walking along Derry Road, just west of Ontario Street, at 12:30 p.m. when he was struck twice in the back with gun pellets.

The pellets bounced off his coat and he wasn't injured, said Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon of Halton Regional Police.

Police were contacted and two suspects were arrested nearby.

Both face weapons related charges, and one a probation related count.

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