

FROM FOOTCARE TO FOOT  
NEEDS



## Fancy footwork

Vanessa Pontet of the Chiropody department of Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital displays a model of a foot with a high arch and the orthotic device used to correct the malalignment. Her demonstration was part of Saturday's Wellness Fair at Milton Mall.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Negotiations are down to the wire

By IRENE GENTLE

Special to the Champion

More than 110 utility workers say they are ready to walk if a contract settlement can't be reached with Halton Region by Thursday (April 9).

Halton Region and CUPE Local 2620 were scheduled to hit the bargaining table Monday (April 6) in an 11th hour attempt to avert a strike by the environmental services workers, who have been without a contract since January of last year.

Negotiations began in June 1997 between Halton and the workers, who operate and maintain water purification and wastewater treatment plants for Halton.

Talks broke down in March after failing to achieve resolution on key issues such as:

- Wage increases. Workers who have been without a raise in 6-years are looking for a 50 cents an hour across the board increase
- Decreased benefits. The union has rejected a proposal by the Region to cut wage payments to employees injured on the job.

According to CUPE Local 2620 President Gerry Dean, workers were initially looking for wage parity to put their paycheques in line with environmental services employees from other regions.

"We found out our plant operators were so underpaid they would have to be raised about \$5 an hour," said Mr. Dean.

### Want a raise

Instead of parity the union is ready to accept a 50 cents an hour increase over three years.

Halton plant workers presently make \$16.88 an hour. Plant operators in Durham Region recently negotiated a contract giving them an hourly wage of \$20.37, Halton employees indicate.

The union is also battling a proposal by the Region to reduce benefits such as prescription dispensing fees and payment reductions for workers injured on the job. The Region is looking to trim wage payments from 100 per cent to 85 per cent for injured workers.

Also at issue are pay raises linked to Ministry of Environment certification, which is normally achieved via a written exam.

At present, older workers have been able to achieve MOE approval without schooling through a grandfather clause.

Grandfathering can award MOE approval to older workers by taking into account their jobs, skills and experience.

By discarding grandfathering, older workers would be ineligible for pay raises,

• see STRIKE on page 23

## NEWSLINES

### Cops use spray to control man

Police used pepper spray to control an armed man acting irrationally outside McDonald's Thursday.

The call to police came from the Quality Inn on Chisholm Drive, where a man was reportedly at the front desk yelling, screaming and generally behaving erratically.

The man had left the hotel by the time police arrived shortly after 1 p.m., but officers located him outside the nearby McDonald's, said Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon of Halton Regional Police.

But the man became agitated when police approached and told officers he was armed.

A scuffle began as he was being arrested, and an officer used pepper spray, said Det. Sgt. Gordon.

A knife and a bottle of pepper spray were found following a search.

A 36-year-old Weston man was taken to Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington under the Mental Health Act.

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WHAT'S INSIDE the BIG EGG

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Sat April 11, 11:00am

All children who help crack open the egg will receive a souvenir!

FRANKLIN STORY TELLER  
Saturday 11:30 - 12:30