

War on poverty must be like war on cancer; activist

By **DIANE HART**
Special to The Champion

Poverty must move into the realm of social justice if it is ever to receive the same support as cancer or AIDS, says a community activist.

Speaking at the annual general meeting of the Halton Social Planning Council, Mike Balkwill compared the widespread solid support for the war against cancer with the less than solid support for the war against poverty.

The difference, said Mr. Balkwill, is in the perception of each issue.

"AIDS and breast cancer would not get the same level of support today if they had not moved from a mere service delivery to a social

justice issue. And that's what must happen to poverty."

Mr. Balkwill compared the war against cancer with the war against poverty, pointing out that far more money is spent on those with cancer than those who are poor. And, although he said there is a definite straight line between cancer and death, new research by people like Dr. Fraser Mustard is pointing to similar outcomes: Poor people don't live as long and a better economic state means longer lifespans.

In 1993, \$3.3 billion was spent on the war against cancer for 120,000 cancer victims — about \$25,000 per person. In the same year, \$40 billion was spent nationally on all social pro-

grams for Canada's 5 million poor — or \$7,500 per person.

"Does the war against poverty have a \$75 million organization with 350,000 volunteers and research dollars that are matched by government? If there is, I think it must be hiding somewhere," he commented.

He asked the crowd what it was that allowed people to support the war on cancer so solidly, whereas the same support is not there for the anti-poverty battle.

"We can't relate to it as well — while everyone in this room may know someone with cancer or may think there is a chance they may also get cancer, the same doesn't hold true for poverty."

He said it is only by taking it out of the framework of service delivery and placing it as an issue of social justice that any headway will be made. Already, he said the tendency of people is to think like taxpayers and consumers, rather than citizens of caring communities.

By keeping poverty in the realm of just a service a community is obliged to oversee, it is only one of many services.

"And service only works in a context where justice has already been established, as it has with AIDS and breast cancer. Then people will say to themselves that yes, it is worth allocating resources to this."

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Who am I? My name is Alice Logan. My clinic has been established in Milton since November 1997 at 310 Main Street. I have been practising massage for almost 5 years; 2 years as a student athletic therapist at Brock University, two years at school and as a Registered Massage Therapist for a year this August. I have the use of therapeutic ultrasound in my clinic, along with therapeutic wax & ice massages. To learn more, pick up a pamphlet today in suite 201 at 310 Main Street or call me at 693-3546.
Submitted by: **Alice Logan**
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