

Workers who help troubled teenagers hit the bricks

By PAUL MITCHISON
Special to The Champion

A picket line was set up outside the Guelph Line offices of Halton Adolescent Support Services (HASS) after social workers walked off the job in a contract dispute.

Darrell Baudoux, union representative, said the strike began reluctantly after members voted Thursday to reject the company's final offer. He said members felt badly young people were being adversely affected by the dispute.

"We'd rather be back working with young people, but we're prepared to stay out as long as we need to — the membership is very strong," he said.

There are about 55 striking members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Local 262, many of them part-timers, whose job it is to offer counseling and support for teenagers and their families.

Management said the strike boils down to a demand that the union reduce vacation time and sick days for a handful of members. No raises are being requested — salaries range from \$23,000 to \$36,000 — and the pay scale hasn't increased since 1993.

The social workers had earlier received the final contract by courier at their homes, which Mr. Baudoux described as an attempt to undermine the union leadership. Management said it wanted correct information to reach the membership and to encourage a vote.

That prompted a Thursday vote on the contract and the ensuing rejection. The bargaining committee had been given a strike mandate by workers in May.

HASS operates a 24-hour crisis line and three group homes throughout Halton for young people unable to live at home. One is in Milton.

Management said the outstanding issue involves its demand to scale back vacation time for six members. The union maintains it will cut some of those vacation

entitlements in exchange for increased time off for others and also for time-and-a-half on statutory holidays.

Ugo Filice, executive director of HASS, said the organization has no choice but to demand concessions from the membership, including what he called "excessive" vacation entitlements allowing several employees two months off.

He said the organization had a deficit of \$42,000 last year, which depleted its reserves by half, and that no union jobs have been lost despite declining operating funds from the province.

Leah Casselman, Ontario Public Service Employees Union president, joined the picket line Friday morning, and told strikers they were doing the right thing.

More than a dozen pickets carried signs with slogans such as "We are here for fairness, is that wrong?" and "This is not what we want". They also handed out information leaflets to passing drivers.

Young people in crisis care are being returned to their families. The equivalent of five management workers remained on the job, said Mr. Filice. The organization has somewhere between 150 and 200 ongoing cases, and a strike meant only 27 of those clients were expected to continue receiving service.

Theft attempt

Two vehicles in the driveway of a Coulson Avenue home were damaged in what police are viewing as an attempted car theft.

The vehicles were likely damaged early July 4, before 7 a.m., police said. A 1996 green Plymouth Voyager Van valued at \$25,000 had a door pried open and its ignition damaged in the attempted theft.

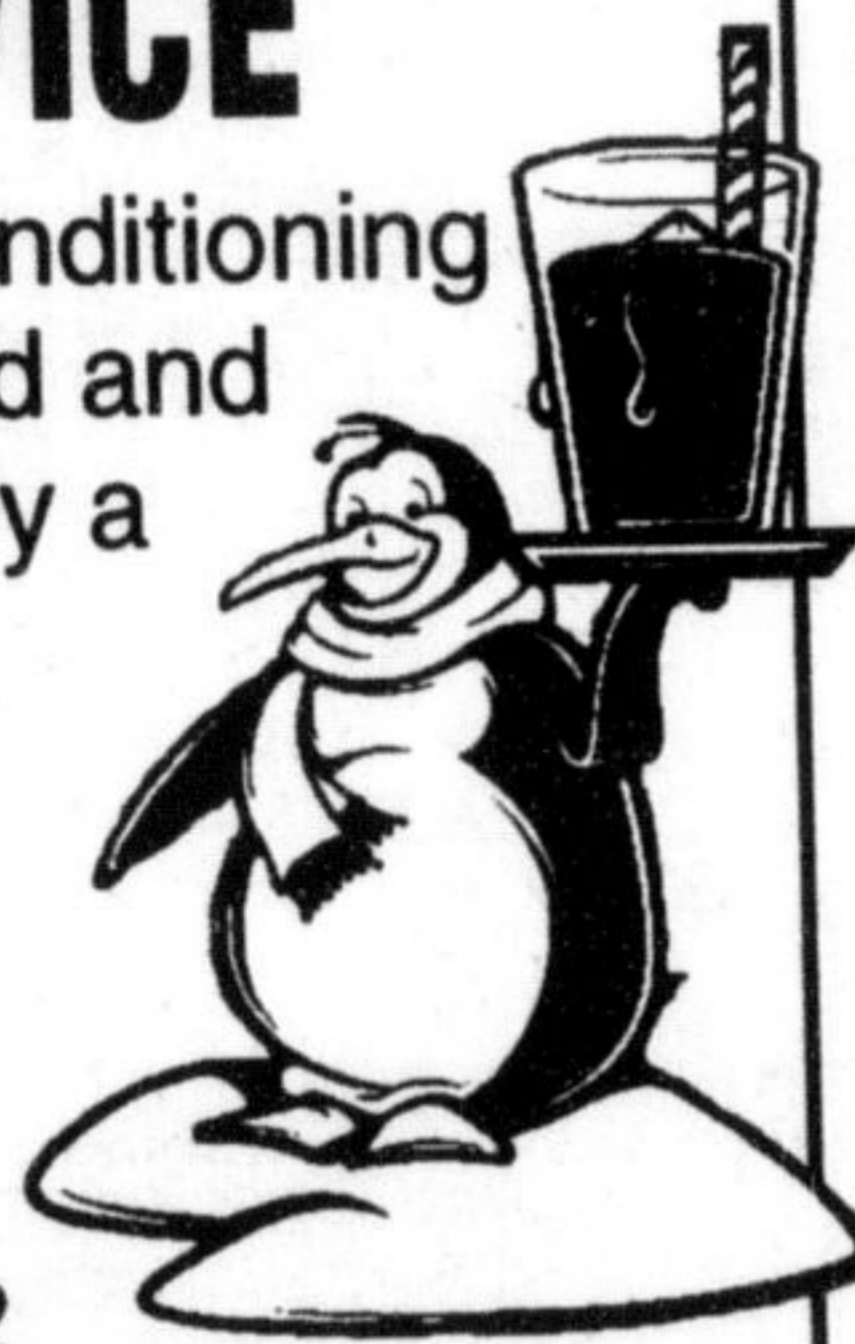
A white Dodge Spirit in the same driveway had its door pried open.

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NOTICE OF SECOND WORKSHOP CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SECONDARY PLAN Making Downtown Work Together

Milton's population is projected to grow to about 85,000 people. This growth brings with it many opportunities for the downtown core. The time is now for Milton to decide what it wants its downtown to look and feel like in the future so that future growth can be properly managed to support this vision.

On Thursday, July 25th, the first in a series of three public workshops was held to generate discussion about the future of Milton's downtown core/Central Business District (CBD). The participants of the workshop included Milton residents, business owners, staff from the Milton Planning & Development Department, and specialists from Dillon Consulting.

Workshop #2 Thurs., July 23, 7:00 - 10:00 pm, Hugh Foster Hall (beside Milton Town Hall). Although there was a great turnout for the first workshop, we want the second workshop to be even better by having you there! Your participation is essential to the success of the CBD Secondary Plan because the plan must meet the needs of the people who live, work and play in Milton. We'll revisit the themes from Workshop One and additional themes are also expected to emerge. The group will help to determine which elements will be carried forward to more detailed analysis.

Visit our Internet site at <http://www.town.milton.on.ca/cbd/> or contact Anne Bouck at the Town of Milton Planning & Development Department by phone (905) 878-7211 ext. 150. or by fax (905) 878-5639. If you'd like to speak to someone in person please drop by the Planning & Development Department at Milton Town Hall.

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