

# Money to study homelessness helps, says Halton

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Halton has been handed a \$100,000 opportunity to investigate homelessness in the region.

The money is Halton's share of a \$4.2 million initiative by the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services to battle homelessness.

"It's just a small amount but it will help," said Adelina Urbanski, the Region's commissioner of health and community services.

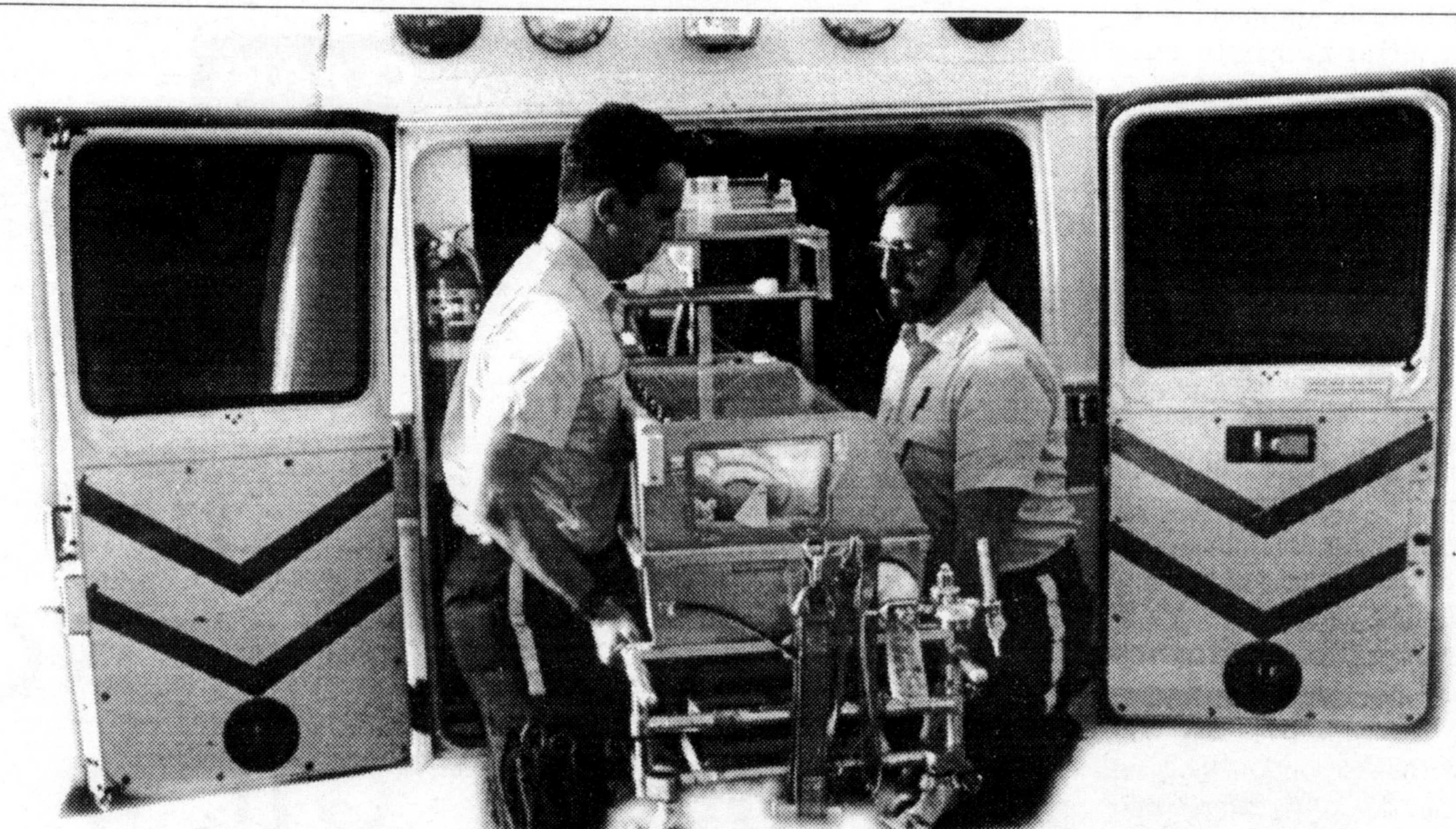
According to a late 1998 regional report, Halton currently has an ad hoc approach to homelessness.

With no shelters dedicated solely to the problem, the vacuum is filled by churches, The Salvation Army and Halton Woman's Place, said the report.

In response, a community consultation group has been formed to pinpoint the problem and devise a way to deal with it, said Ms Urbanski.

"In a caring society you want to do something for them. We'll throw some money on it and hopefully we'll feel better"

— TED CHUDLEIGH



## Don't allow Ambulance Services to be the next casualty of the Health Care crisis: Ambulance Paramedics

**A**mbulance services have been in the news lately. Barely a night goes by when several hospitals in the GTA aren't on "redirect" and paramedics have to scramble to find a hospital that will take critically ill patients, or people with life-threatening injuries.

Overcrowded hospitals mean things are getting pretty scary!

### Private, for-profit ambulance services are not the answer

Even scarier, the province recently downloaded ambulance service delivery to municipal governments, some of whom are seriously considering handing this vital service over to the private sector!

If you think services are stretched now, can you imagine what would happen if private companies were involved?

### York, Durham and Halton considering their options

Wisely, the Regional governments in York, Durham and Halton have commissioned a joint study on the delivery of ambulance services before deciding what to do. They are considering a number of "delivery models," including — believe it or not — privatization.

We believe Regional Councillors have only one

choice to make — **to keep the system public!** Here's why:

- Experience in the U.S. and some Canadian provinces shows that while private companies may promise lower costs in order to get a contract, once successful they will demand more money or threaten a community with a loss of service.
- According to a report of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average cost billed to American Medicare for ambulance services in 1995 was \$500(U.S.). In contrast, the average cost for the public ambulance service in Ontario was \$200 (Canadian).
- Private operators will want a profit margin of 15% or more. This adds to the cost of ambulance service.

### Call your York, Durham or Halton Regional Councillor

Ambulance services are a vital part of our health care system, not a consumer good. People in these three Regions currently can rely on some of the highest-trained ambulance paramedics anywhere in the world. Paramedics take great pride in their work and are there when you need them.

*If you live in York, Durham or Halton Regions and believe ambulance services should not be for sale, call your Regional Councillor and tell them privatization is simply not an option!*

## A message from the Paramedics in York, Durham and Halton Regions

"The community is going to come up with ideas," she said. "What has the biggest bang for the buck?"

Though the issue may have a low profile, homelessness is a concern in Halton, Ms Urbanski said.

"We're not suggesting to anyone that our problem is the same as Toronto, but there is a problem," she said. "We do have homelessness, we do have issues of crisis housing and affordable housing."

"When someone is evicted from their apartment or house, that's a real problem."

High housing and cost of living expenses without local safety nets are harbingers of a homelessness problem in Halton, said Lynne Calderbank-Russell of the Halton Social Planning Council.

"We more or less think that Halton has the preconditions to cause homelessness," she said. "For people who are working low-income jobs or on social assistance, it just doesn't cover it."

The provincial initiative is aimed at getting people off the streets and, if possible, back to their own communities, said Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh.

"Many of the homeless in Toronto come from somewhere else," he pointed out. "The idea is for local communities to keep people local and not (have them) gravitate towards Toronto."

His experience with the homeless in Toronto has taught him that the issue is a complex one, said Mr. Chudleigh.

"It's shocking when you drive up Bay Street. You talk to them and you know right away there's a problem but God, they're not unhappy," he said.

"What they eat is a lot of refuse from restaurants and yet they're the healthiest people. They don't get sick, they don't get colds."

Mr. Chudleigh acknowledged that it's tough to simply buy a solution to homelessness.

"In a caring society you want to do something for them," he said. "We'll throw some money on it and hopefully we'll feel better."

## Talking drug use

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ration and heart beat.

"So many people don't see alcohol as a dangerous drug," Ms Hall said.

The biggest reason kids get into drugs is peer pressure, she said. "There's a big pressure for the kids to fit in."

Other reasons include escapism, curiosity, boredom and a lack of comfort with saying no.


Ms Hall recommended that in discussing drug issues with their children, parents should create hypothetical situations to give their kids practice in refusing alcohol or drugs.

And parents shouldn't forget how important it is for them to set a good example — by not drinking and driving or being intoxicated in front of their children.

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