

Halton Women's Place eyeing new Milton facility

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**
The Champion

With a \$3 million Milton facility on the way, Halton Women's Place operators hope fewer families will have to be turned away.

Last year, the shelter for abused women and their children refused 540 families, mostly resulting from a lack of beds.

"Demand is high and we've outgrown our building," said Theresa Greer, Halton Women's Place executive director.

"Our shelter is going to be bigger than the current shelter is, so we'll be able to provide more spaces."

The facility, currently in the planning stages, will provide temporary housing for up to 20 abused or homeless women and children. The existing facility provides 11 beds.

"Our women were actually staying about 14 days, but given the lack of affordable housing our average today is now 25 days," Ms Greer told the Region's health and social services committee Tuesday. "The number of women we're able to serve in a given year has declined because they're staying longer."

In times of emergency, the new shelter will have the capability to swell to about 25 beds.

Halton Women's Place has already received \$1.5 million from the Province and \$485,000 from the federal government to build the new facility. Fundraising initiatives will begin in September to raise the

additional \$1 million needed.

The new 11,000-square-foot building will be constructed on Childs Drive, neighbouring the new Halton Regional Police station.

"Our plan is to develop this site from the existing curb to the existing sidewalk," said Dennis Wilson, project consultant.

"What we're trying to do is develop a totally self-contained site."

Housing both residences and administration areas, the building is to contain 11 or 12 bedrooms of various sizes. Bedrooms will have either their own or a shared bathroom.

"Our sleeping and residential areas are set up very flexibly to accommodate different family sizes," Mr. Wilson said.

In addition to the brick-face building, the

shelter will also have an outdoor play area.

"We're trying to do a big house as opposed to an institutional building," Mr. Wilson said. "The whole goal is to try to make the women and children feel comfortable."

Halton Women's Place expects to deliver construction plans to the Town of Milton for planning consideration by the end of

the month. The groundbreaking ceremony is tentatively scheduled for September — with the occupancy date set for summer, 2002.

Renovations are also planned at Halton Women's Place's Burlington shelter as part of the \$3 million project, but further details are unavailable. No beds are expected to be added.

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