



Burlington MPP Paddy Torsney makes the funding announcement.

Region getting dough to fight homelessness

BY TIM WHITNELL
Special to The Champion

It's considered the invisible scourge of more affluent communities like Milton, but homelessness, for a variety of reasons, exists in Halton.

To assist those individuals and families who find themselves without short or long-term shelter, and to stem the tide of locally-displaced people having to go outside their region for emergency accommodations, the federal government instituted the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI).

Phase 1 of the two-part funding scheme has ended but on Friday Burlington's MPP announced funding details for the second phase.

Paddy Torsney told social service agency representatives and media members assembled at the Transitions For Youth office on Harvester Road that the government is giving Halton Region another \$1.005 million over three years to combat homelessness.

Though not present at the announcement, Halton Regional Chair Joyce Savoline sent along her thanks for the much-needed money.

"This is wonderful news for Halton as approximately 1,300 people become homeless in Halton each year," she said in a press release. "The Community Plan is a made-in-Halton solution driven by the guiding principle that people in Halton should be able to live in their community."

Ms Torsney said the funding is a commitment to an ongoing national problem.

"In 1999, communities such as ours from coast-to-coast identified homelessness as a major concern," Ms Torsney told the audience.

"All-in-all, the NHI is now a more than \$1 billion program.

"Now, as we did five years ago, we rec-

ognize that there are no simple or instant solutions to homelessness and its root causes. No Canadian should go to bed hungry or without a roof over his or her head," said Ms Torsney.

Ms Torsney said afterward that she and her staff have seen both ends of the homelessness/poverty spectrum, from those who don't realize its existence to those living through it.

"Somebody once told me that there are no families in Burlington making less than \$35,000 a year. I said, 'Oh yes there are.'"

Ms Torsney noted she and members of her constituency office in Burlington have talked directly to people in need of emergency housing, like a family of six that needed to find accommodations for under \$1,000 per month.

"You're not going to find it here. We have to send them to Hamilton."

She said some people who live basically paycheque to paycheque encounter crises like a job loss, illness or a marriage break-up.

"Any one of us could have a series of events that could put us in a (bad) situation.

"This is a very tough community to not be successful in, and then to have to come forward (for help), but if you do come forward there are a lot of groups who will help."

Halton Region, through its Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), has received 18 applications from groups for federal NHI funding of locally-proposed projects.

Approval of individual projects is done by Halton Region council and is expected at its July 14 meeting.

The application deadline for project funding through the Region's Community Plan is Thursday. For more details, call Halton's SCPI co-ordinator, Sally Pincock, at (905) 825-6000, ext. 4447.

Region staff raise \$170,000

Halton Region employees set a new personal record for giving to the United Way during its 2003 campaign.

During the April 21 meeting of regional council, Halton Region Chair Joyce Savoline and Halton Employees United Way Committee Chair Lina Islip presented a cheque for more than \$170,000 to Alison Pickard, chief executive officer of the United Way Oakville.

"I was very pleased to present the United Way of Oakville with Halton Region's 2003 campaign proceeds," Ms Savoline said. "It is a symbol of our commitment to

the community. Our continuing support of the United Way demonstrates the generosity and caring of Halton Region employees."

Halton Region's 2003 campaign resulted in an 8 per cent increase — almost \$13,000 — in employee donations from 2002. The United Way will distribute the donation to all the charitable services that serve the area municipalities.

"The events are always fun and it's good to see how the Region is helping the community," Ms Islip said. "You feel like you're making a real difference."

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