

Bereaved Families at risk of closing

By John Stewart
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Instead of making plans this summer to celebrate its 20th anniversary, the Halton-Peel Chapter of Bereaved Families of Ontario is trying to avoid planning its own wake.

The organization, which facilitates support groups for people whose children or spouses have died, is facing the stark reality that it might have to close the doors to its office in Mississauga by the end of March.

In an "urgent message" in its members' newsletter, the local chapter says, "Unless we get new volunteers and can fundraise \$100,000 before March 15, we will have to close our doors. This will be our last appeal for help and support."

In an interview at the group's offices, Richard Sheppard, chair of the board of directors, said there aren't enough resources left within the organization to meet the demands of 200 phone calls per month and 16 grief counselling groups per year.

Sheppard, vice-president of sales at Bell Canada, said there are only three of the six board positions filled at the moment.

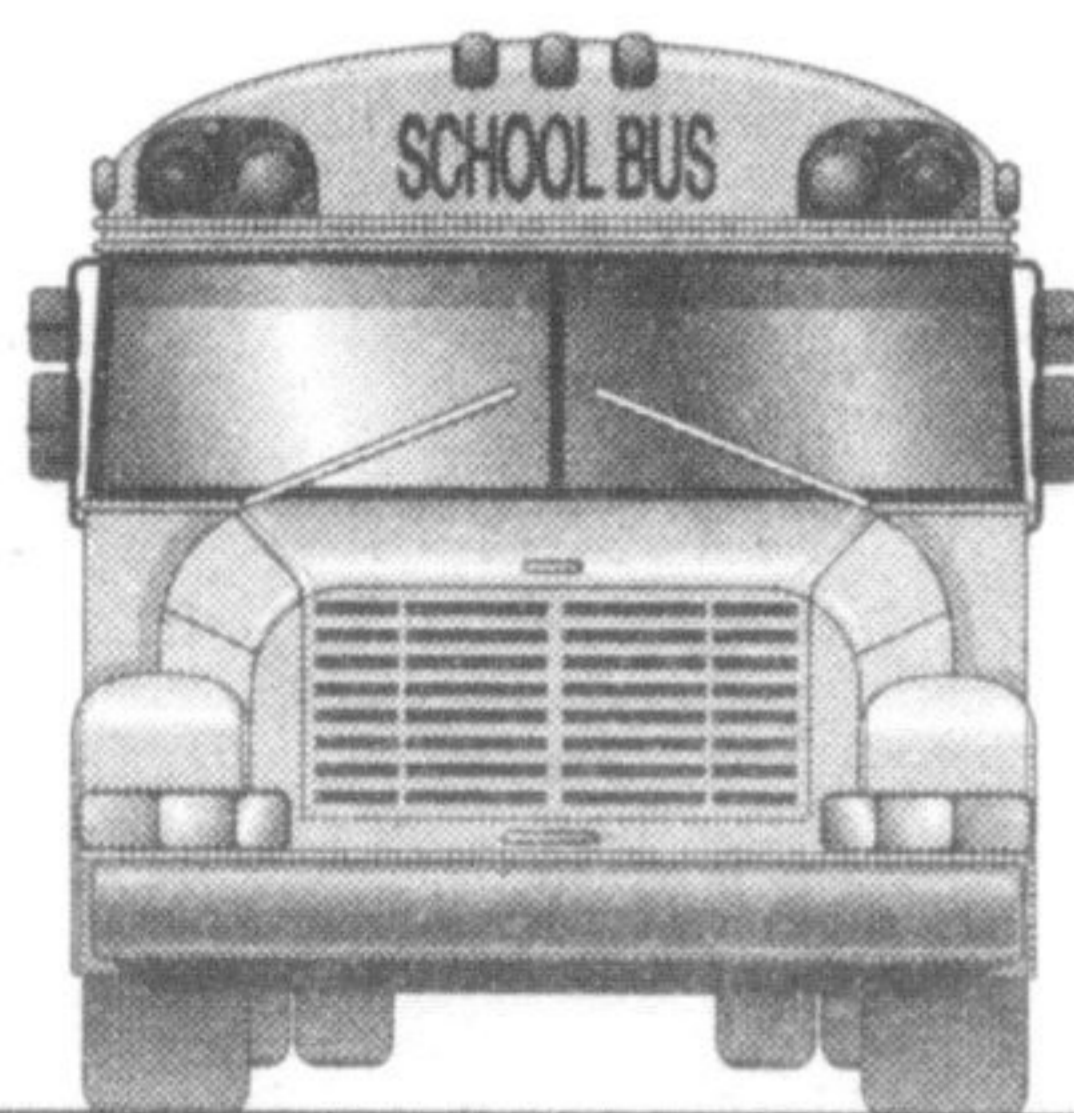
The staff has been reduced to two part-time people. The executive director's position is vacant.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization, but our volunteers have dwindled," said the Mississauga resident, who joined the group after his wife died.

"We have a core group of about 40 people, but they're tired."

The organization gets no public funding, although it has received grants in the past from Peel United Way and the Town of Oakville and has recently applied to the Ontario Trillium Corporation.

But with its skeleton staff and weak volunteer base, demonstrating the long-term sustainability that funders are seeking is difficult.



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Dateline

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of \$2.50 for members and \$4.50 for non-members. Its Friday Evening Movie is held at 7 p.m. featuring "Reign Over Me" at a cost of \$2. And Evening Euchre takes place at the Campbellville Lions Hall at 7:30 p.m. for \$2.50. For more information, call (905) 875-1681.

Registration for Town of Milton spring and summer recreation programs starts at 9 a.m. (March 4 for non-residents) via Internet or automated phone. Or register in person at the Milton Leisure Centre, Milton Sports Centre, Milton Seniors' Activity Centre or Town Hall Annex 555. For more information, see the spring and summer Community Services Guide, visit www.milton.ca or call (905) 878-7252, ext. 2189.

The Halton Youth Symphony performs a fundraising concert entitled 'Leap into Spring' at 7:30 p.m. at Holy Trinity High School, 2420 Sixth Line in Oakville. Tickets

cost \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors and students and are available by calling (905) 616-2760.

Saturday March 1

The Milton Stamp Club holds its free Milton Stamp Fair at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Dr., from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It features 14 diversified dealers. For more information, call (905) 878-1533 or e-mail alman@globalserve.net.

The Halton Environmental Network (HEN) holds its annual general meeting from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Halton Regional Museum in the historic barn at Kelso Conservation Area. Registration starts at 9 a.m. The meeting includes a launch of HEN's residential solar panel project, speakers, displays, a hike or film viewing, lunch and more. The cost is \$10. Everyone's welcome. To attend, call Renee at (905) 339-2290 or e-mail info@the-hen.net.

Hornby Co-operative Nursery School,

13526 Steeles Ave. (at Trafalgar Road), holds an open house and 2008 program registration session from 10 a.m. to noon. For more information, call (905) 878-5211 or e-mail hornbynurseryschool@yahoo.ca.

The Milton Christian Education Association holds its third annual fundraising dinner and auction on behalf of Milton Christian School. It takes place at 6:30 p.m. at the Grand Chalet on Steeles Avenue and features a four-course meal and silent and live auctions. To reserve a spot, e-mail info@miltonchristianschool.com.

Sunday March 2

The Children's Hour presents "Morgan's Journey," a storytelling event suitable for ages two to eight, at 2:30 p.m. at Milton Bible Church, 200 Main St. E., next to Bergsma's Home Decor. The cost is \$10 for adults, \$7.50 for the first child and \$5 for each additional child. For more information, call (905) 878-7962.

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