

Training funds to produce hundreds of jobs in Halton

By **ROB KELLY**
The Champion

Between 300 and 500 jobs should be available soon at four Halton companies that are expected to make use of a provincially sponsored, employment training program, according to Halton Region's business development director.

Brent Kearsse is sitting on news of what firms are involved pending finalization of negotiations and an announcement of the economic boost from Queen's Park. The provincial government is providing seed money for the worker training through its jobsOntario program.

The amount of funding available from the province depends on the depth of training required per worker to obtain employment. But Ontario will commit as much as \$10,000 per employee.

Of the four companies, "we're working with two of them to start placing jobs," Mr. Kearsse said. The other two companies, as of last week, had not signed final agreements committing to the jobsOntario agenda. But, "it's a matter of dotting the i's and crossing the t's," Mr. Kearsse said.

"We think this is good news," he continued. "Two of the companies are actually hiring now." Two firms are manufacturing concerns and the others are "quasi-service companies," Mr. Kearsse said. "They're good jobs."

In terms of where the news fits in a lingering recession-restructuring period, Mr. Kearsse noted, "I don't want to say we've turned the corner, but I'm certainly optimistic. Building permits are up and bankruptcies are down."

However, "we're not out of the woods yet," he cautioned. "We're right in the midst of restructuring."

Mr. Kearsse recently obtained council approval to transfer six regional employees from another program to jobsOntario work to cope with the expected increase in

demand for applicant processing with the newfound employment.

Halton's goal is to place at least 1,812 employees at work through the jobsOntario program by the fall of 1995. "We're hopeful we can surpass that target," Mr. Kearsse said. Not counting the four new companies, 238 people have obtained permanent work through the initiative in Halton to date, he said.

Although Halton became officially involved with jobsOntario in mid-1992, "for the last six months we've been trying to figure out the rules of the game," Mr. Kearsse said.

Momentum appears to be growing, however. Halton is part of a job training advisory committee also comprising members from Sheridan College, the boards of education, provincial representation and delegates from labour, said Mr. Kearsse.

"It's the first time all these groups have gotten together," he said. "We realized it's a very good model for other things we're doing. The committee may take on a bigger role in the future."

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