

York Region's welfare woes likely to continue

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Staff Writer

A marginal decrease in York's welfare caseloads for a one month period is "nothing to get excited about," says the region's community services commissioner, Peter Crichton. Crichton says a slight blip in

the region's welfare rolls from March to April don't indicate a "trend" that York's social assistance burden is easing up.

"This was just a slight blip, it's almost nothing. I'd like to think it's a downward trend, but it's likely not," Crichton said.

Latest figures from the community services department show 34 less people cashed welfare cheques in April than in March - the first drop, however slight, in more than a year.

But Crichton said the the department wouldn't consider

a trend showing economic revival unless caseloads dropped by 100 and continued to drop at that pace for three months heading into the fall.

"A slight decrease during (the summer months) just shows people are getting seasonal work. This is still a jobless

recovery," he said.

In fact, Crichton said "all information coming to us" indicates York's welfare woes will likely continue.

He said the region's welfare expenditures are rising "a lot faster than we projected." Crichton said York is seeing less single mothers and more families on welfare than anticipated, which means more cost to regional taxpayers.

He said Ontario takes over 100 per cent of the costs for single mothers, but only 90 per cent of the costs for families.

"We're seeing more single employable and unemployable which means we're spending more than we would like," he said.

Reports show regional homeowners have paid \$4 million so far this year, a \$27 million provincial tab, with 3.2 per cent of York's 504,000 population on welfare.

More than 9,750 residents collected welfare in April, up from 7,669 caseloads in April 1992, according to the latest reports.

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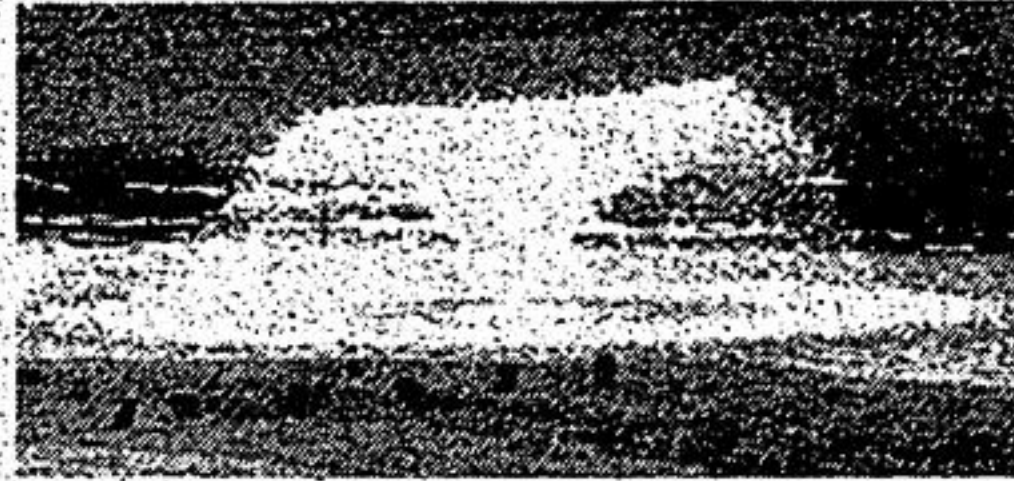
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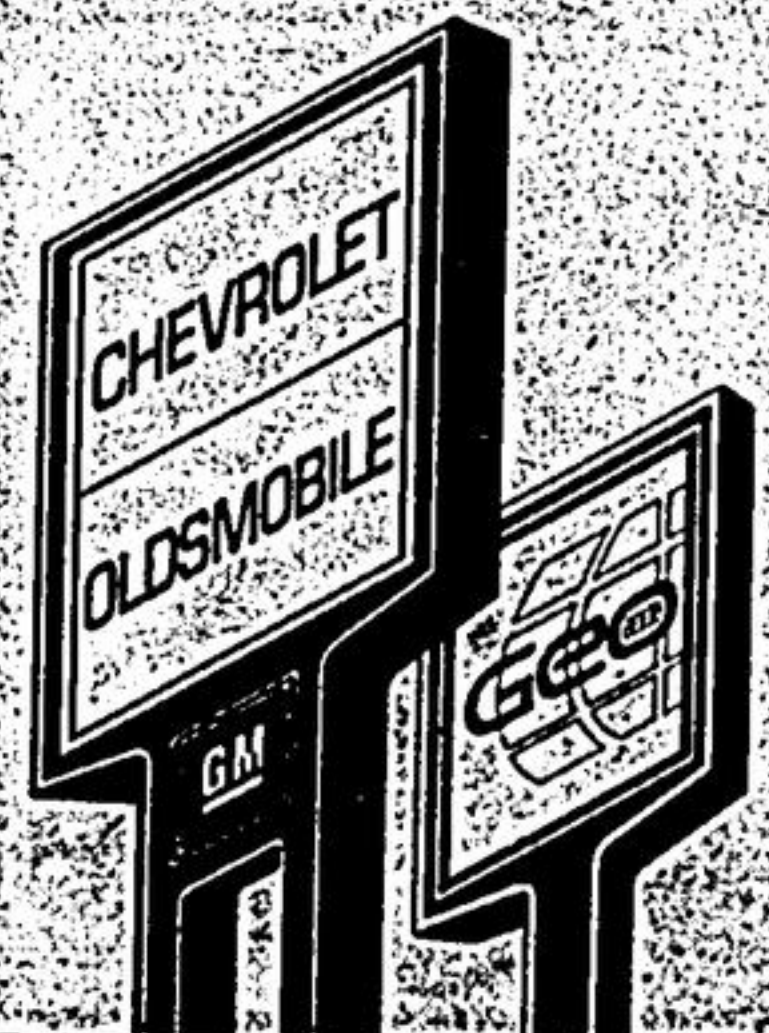
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