



**GRAND OPENING:** The official opening of the Edward Jones investment firm was marked with a mayoral ribbon cutting last Friday. From left: Annette Snoddon, Edward Jones investment representative Steve Snoddon, Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor, David Burwell of Edward Jones in Toronto and branch office administrator Kathy Ollidis.

Photo by MIKE RUTA

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# Children's Aid staff accept new contract

Deal passed by 52 per cent vote

MIKE ADLER  
Staff Reporter

Social workers and office staff for the York Region Children's Aid Society have a two-year contract this week after taking a day off the job.

A provincial conciliator helped get a tentative deal with 58 members of Ontario Public Service Employees Union Local 304 just hours before a strike began.

"They had planned to begin a strike as of Sunday midnight but they met Sunday and reached an agreement," said Myra Hurst, the society's manager of communications and planning.

The staff, technically on strike Monday, stayed away from work to vote on the deal, which 52 per cent approved. The workers had agreed not to picket on that day.

"Although we accepted the agreement, I don't know there's a feeling of overall happiness," local OPSEU president Sandra Garibotti said yesterday.

The deal includes two raises of one

per cent, the first effective April, 1997. Salaries now range from \$22,735 to \$45,976 with clerical staff tending to be at the lower end.

Many members feel they are accepting a loss, because they will be working longer office hours, said Garibotti: "Our increase does not fully compensate us for the added time."

The society's hours, which were 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., are shifting to 9:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., a change management says meets a demand for service later in the day.

Staff will only work an extra 15 minutes a day, Hurst said.

"We believe that the new contract makes changes that will help the society to be more accessible to the community, and we thank the union members for their positive response," Peter Weston, vice-president of the society board of directors added Monday in a release.

But Garibotti said society workers were already available to visit clients' homes at other times of day.

# Health council to be merged with Simcoe

Ontario's government is folding the York Region District Health Council

into a new group that will speak for the health needs of more than one million people.

The health council, which has reported to the minister of health since 1992, will be merged with its Simcoe County counterpart, said Graham Constantine, its executive director.

The province is turning 33 health councils into 16, probably because it thinks larger areas are better for carrying out its vision of "integrated" health care systems, he said.

But since the combined Simcoe and York Region council will be roughly the same size, local people may not have the same say as before, Constantine said.

"I'm not sure that the same level of community input is going to be available," he added before the council's volunteer board of provincial appointees met Tuesday.

The chair of the board said the new council's effectiveness as a link between the ministry, health care providers and the public will depend on "just how well we do our job."

But John Wilson, also president of the Unionville Home Society in Markham, thinks the two bodies should meet soon to start planning the merger.

"I don't think their approach will be very different than ours," he said of the Simcoe group.

Membership in the new councils will likely be done on the same formula, Wilson said. As things are, 40 per cent of the York board appointees come from local care providers, 40 per cent are ordinary health "consumers" and the rest are municipal representatives.

Wilson said the changes mean the five staffers at the council's Newmarket office will lose their jobs. But it's possible they could be rehired after the new council is appointed and starts looking for staff, he said.

-Mike Adler

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