

THE MISSISSAUGA Times

Established 1938

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The Mississauga Times, 2300 South Sheridan Way, Mississauga, Ont. L5J 2M4, is published every Wednesday by Metrospan Community Newspapers, a division of Metrospan Printing and Publishing Ltd.

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Success

Take 90 women 20 to 40 years old with early high school educations, children and broken marriages, living on welfare payments with no idea how to become self-dependent again and return to the mainstream. Is that a gloomy story?

No, not when you throw them into the Region of Peel's rehabilitation program called Project 90.

The story, as told on Page 17 of this week's Times, is one of increased self-confidence, upgraded educations and work — real life, honest day's work.

Project 90, the brainchild of Peel's social services department, is an unqualified success, and the figures prove it. The two, 12-week courses offered to 90 women in Brampton and Mississauga cost \$55,000. The savings in welfare payments that would have gone to now-employed women total almost \$260,000.

Of the 90 women who started the courses, 70 per cent are now, four months after its conclusion, working or upgrading their education.

And the vast majority of the others have at least a better idea how to cope in a world made unbearably foreign by the stigma and isolation of welfare. And they have acquired some degree of self-confidence that will no doubt pay off in the long run.

The program was not entirely effective — some women haven't changed much and that's a pity. But the ones who wanted help, who were prepared to improve their lot and just needed a boost, have done that. And that's what our idea of government assistance is all about — helping those who want to help themselves but don't know how or can't.

The women and Peel's social services department deserve congratulations. We look forward to many more Project 90s and shorter welfare rolls.

We're fore worms

Sometimes a good idea just needs the slightest advancement to develop into a real gangbuster.

Take, for example, recreation and parks commissioner Lyle Love's comments this week. He told city councillors he wants to hire some worm-pickers who will practise their nocturnal trade on the fairways and greens of the city-owned Lakeview golfing course.

The income from selling those worms totalled \$5,000 in a previous year, and stands to help out the beleaguered taxpayer. Besides that, the pickers will deter vandals, who themselves like to pick regularly on the Lakeview clubhouse.

Well, if the city could just convince developers, industrialists, retailers, shopping mall owners and boards of education to install putting greens and fairways all over the city, the advantages would be enormous.

Imagine all that beautiful green space. Imagine the employment boom for worm-pickers. Imagine the boost to our economy selling all those worms. Imagine the tourism possibilities of becoming the country's worm capital. Imagine the deterrence to vandalism. Imagine all those greens and fairways just begging to be used on a sunny summer's day . . .

THE MISSISSAUGA
Times

Classified advertising 252-6391

Other departments . 823-3800

Production manager Alan Jordan
Circulation and Promotion supervisor Ian MacPherson

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Subscription rates: Home delivery by carrier \$13.00 per year in advance \$1.00 every four weeks. Single copy sales 25¢. By mail \$3.20 per year in Canada. \$2 a year outside Canada. Authorized as second class mail registration number 1235.

Metrospan Community Newspaper publishes The Richmond Hill Thornhill Liberal, The Oakville Journal Record, The Halton Consumer, The Mississauga Times, The Etobicoke Advertiser Guardian, The Etobicoke Consumer, The North York Mirror, The Scarborough Consumer, The Aurora Newmarket York Simcoe Banner, The Woodbridge & Vaughan News and The Bolton Enterprise.



Hazelnuts a sign of spring?

Spring fever came to city hall last week riding on the tails of a few warm sunny days.

The coatless weather made city councillors, city staff and press alike yearn to be elsewhere. Unofficial talk in the council chambers turned to lawn chairs, fishing and the ones that got away.

But the big question around city hall was what bug bit Mayor Hazel McCallion? Her strange behavior left long-time Hazel-watchers bug-eyed and the novice observer's mouth agape.

It's been suggested that the mayor was motivated by something she had for lunch that day or that she was simply overtired. One city councillor told me he felt the mayor's antics were evidence she'd kicked off her re-election campaign without telling anyone.

Others trace the McCallion manner to the evening of her "roast" the week before, saying there's been no living with her since.

Personally, I don't believe that headlines or praise have turned the mayor's head. I think it's something in the water they drink at city hall.

But you decide for yourself, as I recount one day's events.

It seemed apropos for the city's general committee to be debating, Which Should Come First — The Chicken Or The Egg.

Earnest spokesmen for both Maple Lodge Farms Ltd., an independent Brampton-based chicken processing firm, and the United Co-operatives of Ontario (UCO) came to speak to the committee.

The owners of Maple Lodge Farms were there to explain how a shortage of live chickens meant possibly more workers would be laid off, many of whom live in Mississauga and Bramp-



Mary Louise Birks

ton. The UCO spokesmen were on hand to protest that times are tough for the entire chicken industry and it was wrong for the city to support the demands of one local company.

The woes of the chicken broker industry laid before the committee, Mayor McCallion was moved to speak.

The mayor called the confrontation, which the city engineered in order to have both sides present to answer each other's accusations, "an interesting exercise."

Then, stating what many already suspected, the mayor said, "Now, this committee isn't qualified to discuss whether or not chickens should be frozen, live or plucked. We're here because we want the consumers to know the name of the game."

McCallion expressed concern for the plight of 40 Maple Lodge Farms employees who lost their jobs because of the company's predicament.

"Some people may think that 40 people losing their jobs is small potatoes when Ford is laying off thousands," said the mayor, her voice rising in crescendo, "but when my residents are losing their jobs and their homes, I'm concerned."

Returning to the delegations at hand, the mayor thundered, "What are you doing here? This committee doesn't know

anything about chickens. Not that chickens are important anyway . . . And I couldn't care less what your production is. But 40 people are more important to me than anyone laid off in Windsor."

What are you going to do about the chicken industry's problems, said the mayor pounding her fist on the table. Without waiting for an answer, she continued, "It's time to sit down with the provincial and federal governments. It's their responsibility but both governments are doing nothing very well — doing nothing very well indeed."

"Get the people back to work, many of whom are Streetsville Portuguese people in danger of losing their homes," ordered the mayor.

Then, praising the willingness of the committee to hear from both sides, the mayor announced she felt, "the city has made a major contribution today to getting this out in the open."

She concluded with this contrary advice for both delegations, "Leave the government out of this. If you can't put your heads together and solve your problems, it only proves that private enterprise doesn't work."

But UCO's Don Huff had the unexpected last word.

"I appreciate your concern for people, be it four or 40," said Huff. "And I hope the mayor won't be parochial enough not to be concerned about the 95 people we've (UCO) had to lay off."

For once the mayor had nothing else to say. The committee reaffirmed its support for the position of Maple Lodge Farms, which wants a guaranteed supply of live chickens. And I'm still in the dark about what makes Hazel McCallion tick.