

## Peel Social Services want more for those on welfare

# ...but the working poor are biting the bullet, too

By CONNIE RAE  
Times Staff Writer

Welfare recipients are not the only ones in Peel existing below the Statistics Canada poverty line which says a family of four needs at least \$7,220 a year (about \$600 a month) for basic survival. Many working heads-of-households are surviving on near-poverty incomes.

Statistics Canada says any family who spends more than 70 per cent of its income on the basics of shelter, food and clothing, is living in poverty. Other official bodies say the poverty line is higher and the special senate committee on poverty says any family who spends over 56 per cent of its income on these basics is biting the bullet.

The Metro Toronto Social Planning council's definition of poverty is a family of four earning less than \$12,841 a year and the Canadian Council on Social Development maintains that no family should have an income less than half the national family average of \$17,704 a year. Thus, by their definition, anyone earning less than \$8,852 a year is living in poverty.

### AVERAGE MISSISSAUGA WAGE IS \$22,000

Applying this definition to Mississauga (where the average household wage is \$22,204), any Mississauga

family bringing in less than \$11,102 a year, is living in relative poverty. These are family incomes, including wages of both husband and wife, if both are working.

With the minimum wage set at \$2.65 an hour — or about \$5,500 a year (to be raised to \$2.85 in August) — a large number of working Mississaugans are presumably living in poverty.

For instance: A recent newspaper advertisement in The Times advertised a job selling insurance at the airport for the minimum wage for a 40-hour week. When a young man applied he was told they were surprised a man applied — it was such a "junior" position.

The average starting salary of store clerks in the large malls is about \$140 a week. Bank tellers also start at about \$140 a week, (about \$7,400 a year), just at the Statistics Canada poverty line and well below other definitions of poverty.

### AVERAGE WOMAN'S WAGE \$150

We found many smaller firms who still employ in the \$115-\$120 a week range for junior positions, and Mrs. Madelaine Fullman of the Mississauga office of Drake Personnel, estimated the average women's wage in Mississauga to be anywhere from \$115 a week (\$5,980 a year) for beginning file clerks to \$210 (\$10,920 a year) for a senior secretary with shorthand and typing.

She estimated the average women's wage to be \$150 a week or \$7,800 a year.

### CITY HALL DISCREPANCY

Those who fall into the bottom salary category at city hall are women, whose beginning wage is \$7,800 or \$650 a month. Although starting salaries are supposedly equal for men and women, there are no men in the bottom three categories. Eleven men in category four, have a starting salary of \$9,800, or \$817 a month.

Five-sixths of the men at city hall, however, are in category eight or higher. Of the women at city hall, over half of them are in the bottom three categories and less than one-eighth are in category eight or slightly higher.

Paul Vezina, director of social assistance for Peel, says the region is "going to have to address the category of people who work — and still live in poverty."

### THOSE WHO WORK SUFFER

Peel Social Services is applying for an increase for welfare and family benefits recipients to bring them up to the poverty line as defined by Statistics Canada, and although he says this is badly needed, "people who work for low wages should be the first to receive subsidies."

"Often they're the last. The whole system should be geared to those willing to work. There should be an incentive premium."

"The problem hasn't really been looked at," he says, "but those earning only the minimum wage — especially single heads of households — should be receiving supplements," he says.

There are about 3,000 families in Peel receiving family benefits or welfare, but there are another 3,000 who are ineligible for assistance and Vezina admits he doesn't know what happens to them, but points out his department attempts to subsidize day care for those who qualify.

"It's a bit like asking what happens to patients who go home from the hospital," he says. Unfortunately, people aren't aware enough of the subsidy programs available, he adds.

Vezina says apartments in Peel cost about \$300 a month for a two-bedroom, and food costs another \$200 — depending on the family size.

Thus it would appear that anyone earning under the Statistics Canada definition of poverty is existing in strained circumstances — and the number of working people in this category is anybody's guess.

# Community

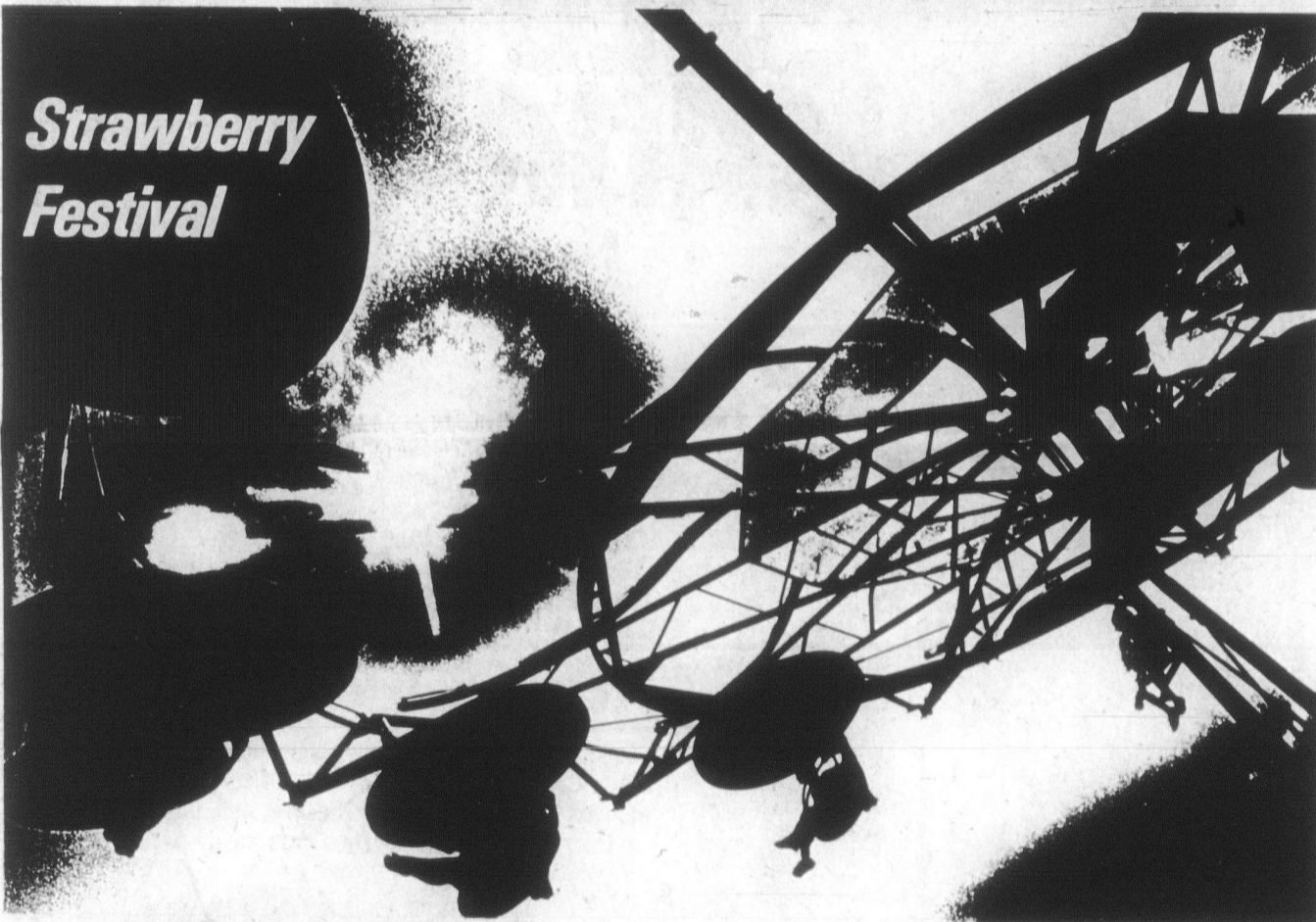
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● Death, pg. 5

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By BETTIE BRADLEY  
Times Community Editor

## Strawberry Festival



What festival? We weren't about to arouse our sleeping beauty and ask her identity, but she proved a neat point: You don't need a mattress, soft music or privacy to catch 40 winks.

Sunday morning was for church services, and Rev. Roy Gellatley (below left) held the attention of the children.

What's a festival without rides, asks Michael Grant, 4 (below).

The warm, summery weather is pulling us out of doors and, if we don't want to stay in our own backyard pulling the weeds and mowing the lawn, we can still stay in our own backyard, because our city has lots to offer.

Two weekends ago it was Artfest. Next weekend will be the opening of Lake Aquitaine. And last weekend had the Mississauga-Dixie Kinsmen and The Salvation Army white elephant sale at Applewood Plaza, the Visual Arts Mississauga garage sale at the old Perrin Fruit Market, the Cloverleaf Garden Club annual show at Sheridan Mall, see page 2, and the Strawberry Festival sponsored by the Erin Mills Kinsmen Club.

The Strawberry Festival was organized and manned by the 36-man club and, after the two-day event, the exhausted Kinsmen were delighted with the festivities but not certain they could find the necessary man-hours to do it all again next year.

The festival began with a parade with floats, majorettes, bands — and 500 participants. The strawberry princesses gathered Sunday afternoon, and Susan Blucher was chosen queen. There was free entertainment (bands, folk dancers) and an evening coronation ball.

Sunday highlights were the pancake breakfast, an ecumenical church service and then the soap box derby.

The event was not a money-maker (there was no admission charge) "but we felt attendance was pretty good — although we're not positive about numbers. We hoped you media people might take a guess," said Kinsman Jim Lingerfelt, adding, "Our estimate is 10,000 plus."

One of the warmest moments came when a couple of the organizers took the day off work to clean up the Common and the surrounding area last Monday.

When they arrived, Erin Mills Senior Public School students had polished off the job and the area was spotless.

Maybe that's the kind of community co-operation that will make the Kinsmen say, when they meet again in September, "Oh, what the heck. Let's do it again next year!"



Of course, there was a go-cart race. Brad Pearsall, 2, on his mini-Volks, checks out Judy Brewster's Jaws cart.



Photos by Ken Kerr

