



Golden Horseshoe Social Action Committee

"We collectively want it known that we come together in the spirit of solidarity and our collective concern and commitment to build effective action against government cuts to the social safety net, health care network, education and labour legislation."

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Workfare Slammed at Welland City Council

"Welland City Council should tell regional council to withdraw from the workfare pilot project," Doug Rogers, representing the Golden Horseshoe Social Action Committee, will tell the Council Tuesday night.

"Workfare is a fraud."

"Workfare is a fraud because it implies that unemployed men and women just have to be given a kick in the pants, and they will go to work. But the facts show that unemployed people want jobs and are already trying hard to become employed. A report by the government last year showed that 95% of Social Assistance recipients were seeking employment and showed proof of it, were employed full or part-time, or were attending school or training. As Doug Hill, manager of North Bay's social services department, said, "The public think they're on for years, but most get off to get on with their lives."

Workfare is a fraud because the government has told people it will save money. But the fact is that municipalities will pay more to administer general welfare assistance under the Ontario Works program. It will cost to provide the supervision and the computer

programs necessary to track participants. Typical of worried workfare supervisors is Susan Lebevre, heading up the program for United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry who said that 'We will experience a ministry clawback" of funding if we don't meet our targets.'

"Workfare is a fraud because it will not lead unemployed men and women to new jobs. In fact, it will eliminate the jobs of people working right now. When then-Community and Social Services Minister David Tsubouchi initiated the Ontario Works program in Niagara Falls, he announced that under workfare, welfare recipients might be required to repair the concrete floor at Firemen's Park. If welfare recipients fix that floor, local workers will not be hired to do the work. With so many unemployed workers, how many jobs will never be created for wages because welfare recipients can be forced to do the work?

"Workfare is a fraud because it suggests that it will lead to training that will help the unemployed get the high-skill jobs Canada needs. Welland Councillor Leo Robbins said July 16 that he supported Workfare because he knew Welland employers who couldn't fill specialist positions. But the Workfare program only aims to get social assistance recipients into any job, not to assist capable workers to get the technical training that would allow them to win skilled positions. In New York City, some welfare recipients have been doing the same entry-level jobs for nearly ten years, while the City has reduced its workforce by 20,000 workers."

The Golden Horseshoe Social Action Committee is an umbrella group of representatives of over 40 community, church and labour groups in Niagara. The group was formed in the fall of 1995. Since that time it has held monthly public meetings for political education and debate on subjects of national and provincial interest.

The Golden Horseshoe Social Action Committee calls upon Welland City Council to urge the Regional Municipality of Niagara to withdraw from the Ontario Works pilot project. You can show real leadership here. If the council for the City of Welland advises Regional Council to withdraw, the Region may re-consider. We could consider other approaches: reducing over-time work, removing financial barriers to post-secondary education, hiring back nurses to care for our ill, hiring preschool teachers to give our young children the best early schooling. Sober second thought might prevent us from enacting a program that will shame us all.