

Chapter 4

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE : MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has outlined the development of organisational response to the Mississauga emergency itself. Equally important is the organisational response involved in meeting the community needs of the quarter of a million people who were evacuated. These needs can be divided into four sections - the needs of:

- (a) the general public;
- (b) those in Evacuation Centres;
- (c) those in institutions, group homes or receiving special care in their homes;
- (d) the people working at the accident site.

Several agencies were involved in meeting community needs for more than one of these groups. The evacuees' perceptions of how these needs were fulfilled are discussed in the following two chapters (5 and 6).

4.2. THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The vast majority of evacuees evacuated themselves, usually by car, and went to stay in private homes and hotels (Chapter 5). While they were away, they needed information about what was happening and when they could return home, some of which was supplied by the media. Many of them left pets behind, and were concerned about their well-being. Some, particularly those who had not taken necessary medication with them, needed access to health care, and in particular, their own physicians. On return, some needed information on concerns about chlorine gas or spoiled food.

4.2.1. Information

Although there was much information about the evacuation transmitted by radio and television, many evacuees wanted to contact authorities about what was happening and when they could go home. Others had specific enquiries about their concerns. The Peel Regional Police Communications Centre phone lines were constantly busy and became overloaded with phone calls from evacuees. On Monday afternoon, Jim Crozier, Commissioner of Social Services for Peel, offered the use of the Regional Office as a Regional Emergency Information Service to take the load off the police. The Bell Telephone computer was instructed to automatically channel all calls coming in to the Police Communication Centre from the public to the Regional Office. The Social Services staff manning the phones were fed the most up-to-date information coming from the Command Post. This service started at 15:00 on Monday and was maintained on a 24 hour basis until noon on Saturday. In that time, there was an estimated 28,000 calls - a number which represents an average of one call from approximately 43% of the households evacuated. The public could also obtain information by phoning the City Hall switchboard, again on a 24 hour basis. For a discussion of the public perception of their information needs and how they were filled, see Section 5.9.

4.2.2. Pets

Beginning Monday, concern about the well-being of pets left behind caused many people to try to get back into their homes to pick up or feed them. Police let some people through near the perimeter, but many others were refused. Meanwhile, Tom Hughes, Director of the Ontario Humane Society, Len Addison, Supervisor of Animal Control for Mississauga,

Chairman Frank Bean, and Staff Inspector MacDonald of the Peel Police, set up a feeding program that went into effect on Tuesday at 16:00 hours.

Through the news media, the public were asked to bring written permission for Ontario Humane Society personnel to enter their premises and their house keys to depots at OHS branches in Toronto, Brampton, Scarborough and Mississauga, and City Hall. An OHS staff member, accompanied by a police officer, was then able to enter each home to give food and water to the pet(s). The pets in the earliest areas evacuated were fed first because they had been left the longest. OHS from branches all over southern Ontario assisted in the operation. By Friday, at 20:00 hours, OHS personnel had entered 1,861 homes, stores and other premises to feed, water and care for over 2,500 animals and birds. The problem of pet care is also discussed in Section 6.11.

4.2.3. Health Care

Mississauga Hospital was evacuated for the full week and doctors in private practice, and their answering services, were also evacuated. Although evacuees had access to medical services in the area to which they moved, they usually did not have access to their own physicians, or to their medical records. This was particularly a problem for those who left without necessary medication - it was difficult to quickly and easily obtain it from strange physicians without any medical records.

There was no pre-planning that anticipated this situation and there was no response until Wednesday, 15 November, after many of the evacuees had returned home. This response was solely on the initiative of Dr. Andrew Sarne,

Director of Emergency Physicians at Mississauga General Hospital, who stayed behind after the evacuation to help people who did not leave the evacuated area. He maintained contact with the six key medical staff in the hospital emergency department and offered their services to the Command Post early on, but was declined. On Wednesday, with cooperation from the Peel Police, Dr. Sarne went into the Emergency Department of Mississauga Hospital for the necessary equipment to set up a mini-emergency service on a 24 hour basis at Apple Hills Medical Centre at Bloor and Dixie. Applewood Medical Associates, Dixie Road Medical Associates, and the Streetsville Medical Centre were opened during the day to administer to non-emergency health needs. These clinics were publicised on the media, via the Command Post, starting Wednesday evening. Unfortunately, the media coverage was not extensive, and many evacuees, including doctors, did not hear about them.

The only other provision made during the emergency to allow contact between doctors and patients was that attempts were made to inform pregnant mothers and those requiring surgery about which hospitals their physicians had been granted visiting privileges at during the emergency.

When people began to return to the evacuated area on Tuesday, many were concerned about the residual effects of chlorine on health, and about spoiled food. Others smelled gases in their homes, businesses or schools. In response to these concerns, the Peel Regional Public Health Unit set up a 24 hour phone service in their regional offices to provide information on chlorine and food spoilage. It operated from Monday morning to Sunday noon. Reports of gas were checked by Public Health personnel (the Ministry of the Environment also answered reports called in to them by going out and checking). The public were advised to throw out doubtful food by the

Public Health Department, via Command Post news releases starting on Tuesday 14 November. The Fire Chief also issued press releases warning residents to air their houses when they got home. Halton Regional Health also maintained a 24 hour phone information service during the emergency. The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Cherkas, and the Director of Environment, Clifford Clark, spent time each day at the accident site as liaison between the Peel Regional Health Unit and the Control Group.

4.3. THE EVACUATION CENTRES

4.3.1. Selecting the Centres

Although the Evacuation Centres sheltered only about 5% of those evacuated, they were the primary focus of the effort to meet community needs. This section will trace the evolution of the Centres from the time they were chosen, through set-up and operation to their closure, and how the various agencies responsible organised their efforts.

The major Centres (the high schools in Mississauga, Streetsville, Brampton, Burlington and Malton; the Sheridan College campuses; the shopping malls and the International Centre) were initially opened by the relevant school boards or administrators in response to police requests.

The other, smaller Centres were initiated by the organisations that opened them; in most cases, the police were informed of, and publicised, their existence. Except for Brampton Scout House, the 707 Galaxy Club in Oakville (a Union Hall), and the Malton Optimists Club, the Centres which opened on their own looked after very few people and/or were short-lived. The first three were well run, had adequate facilities and reported

no organisational problems. Information on the Centres which were opened, their location, the length of time they stayed open, and the number of evacuees passing through each Centre is provided in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, and Table 4.1. There were also several offers of facilities for use as Centres from various groups, but these were never used (Table 4.2).

The police have a list of potential Evacuation Centres and the phone numbers of key personnel to call to request their use in an emergency. The Peel Board of Education have an "on duty" inspector who can be reached through the Streetsville answering service, which can contact whomever is on duty at any particular time, by phone or pagette. The contact person that night, Mr. I. Fraser, alerted Superintendent of Business Affairs, H.J.A. Brown, who arranged with police to open schools as needed. In this emergency, Mr. Brown set up a Board of Education Operations Centre at 15:00 hours at the Kennedy Road field station in Brampton, and the police contacted him as the evacuation expanded to request that additional schools be opened. An over-estimation of need, in Mr. Brown's opinion, led to the unnecessary opening of the two Malton secondary schools when Turner and Centennial schools in Brampton could have comfortably handled the few hundred people staying in the former.

Harley Lischman, Area Superintendent of Plant Operations for the Halton Board of Education was similarly contacted by the Halton Police and requested to make secondary schools available for Evacuation Centres. Mr. Jack Porter, President of Sheridan College was contacted by Peel Regional Police for permission to use the Oakville and Brampton campuses as Centres. The senior staff of the schools and colleges used as Evacuation Centres were important in assisting the set-up and operation of the Centres, particularly in making facilities available

FIGURE 4.1 TIMES AT WHICH EVACUATION CENTRES OPENED AND CLOSED

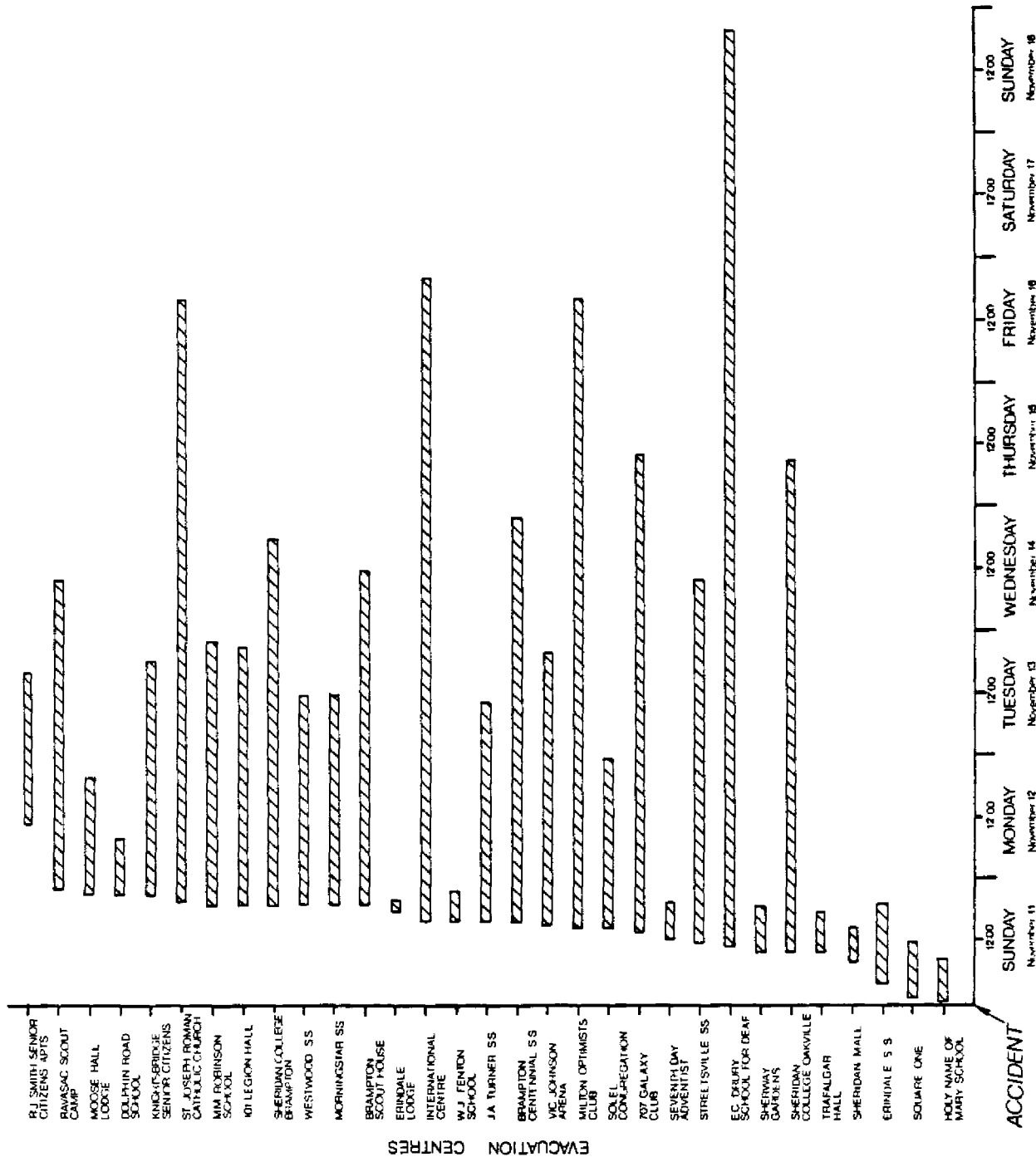


Table 4.1 Evacuation Centres used in Mississauga Emergency

<u>Name of Centre</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of Evacuees</u>	<u>Destination of Evacuees When Centre Closed</u>
Holy Name of Mary School	Mississauga	50	Erindale Secondary School
Square One Shopping Centre	Mississauga	7,000	Streetsville Secondary School/ Sherway Gardens
Erindale Secondary School	Mississauga	500	Streetsville Secondary School/ Morningstar Secondary School
Sheridan Mall Shopping Centre	Mississauga	150-200	Sheridan College (Oakville)/ Erindale Secondary School
Trafalgar Hall	Oakville	9	Sheridan College (Oakville) 4 9
Sheridan College, Oakville Campus	Oakville	435	Home or hotels
Sherway Gardens Shopping Centre	Etobicoke	2,000	J.A. Turner Secondary School/ W.J. Fenton Vocational School/ Brampton Centennial Secondary School
E.C. Drury School for Deaf	Milton	170 from Extendicare Nursing Home 49 from Carmel Heights Home for Aged	Back to residences
Streetsville Secondary School	Streetsville	700-800	Royal York Hotel/ Holiday Inn, Scarborough
Seventh Day Adventist Community Service Centre	Mississauga	10	Unknown
707 Galaxy Club	Oakville	72	Home or elsewhere

Evacuation Centres used in Mississauga Emergency (cont'd)

<u>Name of Centre</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of Evacuees</u>	<u>Destination of Evacuees When Centre Closed</u>
Vic Johnson Arena, Recreational Centre	Streetsville	75-100	Streetsville Secondary School
Brampton Centennial Secondary School	Brampton	300	Holiday Inn, Scarborough
J.A. Turner Secondary School	Brampton	200	Streetsville Secondary School
W.J. Fenton Vocational School	Brampton	200	J.A. Turner Secondary School
Solel Congregation	Mississauga	20	Billeted to families in Congregation
Milton Optimists Club	Milton	70	Home
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church	Streetsville	4	Home
International Centre	Malton	1,000	Home
Erin Mills Lodge Retirement Home	Mississauga	50	Streetsville Secondary School
Brampton Scout House	Brampton	120-150	Home
Morningstar Secondary School	Malton	245	Streetsville Secondary School
Westwood Secondary School	Malton	163	Streetsville Secondary School
Sheridan College, Brampton Campus	Brampton	471	Travelodge Hotel (North York)

Evacuation Centres used in Mississauga Emergency (cont'd)

<u>Name of Centre</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of Evacuees</u>	<u>Destination of Evacuees When Centre Closed</u>
101 Legion Hall	Etobicoke	70-75	Home
M.M. Robinson School	Burlington	425	Home
Knightsbridge Senior Citizens Centre	Brampton	19	Sheridan Villa Home for the Aged
Dolphin Road Senior Public School	Streetsville	40	Streetsville Secondary School
Moose Hall Lodge	Etobicoke	10	101 Legion Hall
Ravasa Scout Camp	Hockley Valley	24	Home

Table 4.2 Additional Evacuation Centres that were established or offered but not used.

<u>NAME OF CENTRE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TIME ESTABLISHED OR OFFERED</u>
Mississauga Valley Recreation Centre	Mississauga	03:54 Sunday, November 11, 1979
Applewood Heights Secondary School	Mississauga	05:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Erindale College	Mississauga	07:26, Sunday, November 11, 1979
#2824 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps	Mississauga	11:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Grace United Church	Brampton	13:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
St. Paul's United Church	Brampton	13:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Hamilton Conference Office of United Church	Hamilton	12:00-24:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Five Oaks Training Centre - United Church	Paris	12:00-24:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Lester B. Pearson Secondary School	Burlington	18:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Century Gardens	Brampton	Sunday, November 11, 1979
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church	Brampton	12:00-24:00, Sunday, November 11, 1979
Brampton Knights of Columbus Hall	Brampton	Sunday, November 11, 1979
Trinity Anglican Church	Streetsville	Sunday, November 11, 1979
Adult Training Centre	Brampton	Monday, November 12, 1979

as they became necessary. The number of Evacuation Centres increased as the evacuated area expanded over Sunday, 11 November (Figure 4.1).

4.3.2. Opening and Staffing the Centres

Those places selected had to be opened and set up as Evacuation Centres. In some cases, this was done before the evacuees began to arrive in large numbers. In other cases, the Centres were announced to the public, both by the police and by the media, before they were ready, and this caused confusion.

The first people on the scene at the major Centres were school staff, or management staff of the malls and International Centre. Centres that opened on their own were generally set up and operated by the groups that made them available, sometimes without outside help. The police contacted the Red Cross and informed them of the opening of the major Centres, except for Sherway Gardens, Westwood Secondary School and the Brampton campus of Sheridan College, where St. John Ambulance were asked to take charge. By the time these organisations had mobilised and arrived on the scene, the local community were often already helping to set up the Centres. These included church groups, service clubs, individual volunteers, and the Boy Scouts and Guides.¹ At the International Centre, Scouts and Guides set up and ran the operation for the first few hours, until a Red Cross team arrived.

Before it was realized that people would be out overnight, the focus of the organisation of the Centres was: the

¹ 'Scouts' here refers to Cubs, Scouts, Venturers and Rovers, the different age groups in the Scouting Organisation. 'Guides' refers to the Pathfinders and Rangers, the older age groups in the Guide Organisation.

registration of evacuees to help find missing family members and friends; the provision of drinks and snacks; and informing the evacuees about what was happening. When it was realized, later on Sunday, 11 November, that people would be out overnight, it became necessary to find blankets and, where possible, something to sleep on (such as gym mats in schools). More substantial food, medical services, separate rooms for sleeping, nurseries for babies and mothers, were also needed. These services had then to be maintained throughout the operation of the Centres.

The Red Cross were identified by the police in Peel and Halton Regions as the key volunteer agency to coordinate the operation of the Centres. In recent years, the Ontario Division of the Red Cross has been setting up separate Emergency Services divisions in their Branches, headed by volunteers who are trained in coordinating Evacuation Centres and other emergency services. Each Branch has a trained Emergency Coordinator and a core group of volunteers who have also received some emergency training. The Red Cross makes these teams available to the authorities, if requested, in emergencies to provide a coordinating function - to coordinate the various services required, and provided by, the agencies and individual volunteers available. This is not an official role conferred on them by the Province, nor is it a role that has been agreed upon formally by the various volunteer and government agencies, in most municipalities, or on a province-wide basis. The Red Cross also specialises in operating Registration and Inquiry in evacuations and has experience in providing first aid and food services.

Margaret Leslie, the Emergency Coordinator at the time for the Mississauga Branch of the Red Cross, was contacted by police within one-half hour of the derailment (see Section 3.3.1).

She came to the site and when it became apparent that evacuation was necessary, she was asked to open the first Evacuation Centre at Square One. As the evacuation expanded, the numbers at Square One, and the necessity to open a second Centre at Erindale Secondary School, meant that the Mississauga Branch could not handle the work load. In such a situation, the Branch calls in their back-up Branch (which was done - North Peel was alerted early in the morning). If further help is needed, which it was, the Ontario Division is alerted. Ken McBride, the Emergency Services Director for Ontario Division, was called at 04:45 by Margaret Leslie for assistance. He in turn called his Assistant Director, Mrs. Millie Blair, and then began to alert the emergency coordinators of nearby Branches to be on stand-by to go to Mississauga when requested by the Mississauga Branch or the police. As Centres opened during the day, Ontario Division Emergency Services Command and Control was established at Ontario Division Headquarters under the command of the Chairman of Emergency Services, Brigadier-General James Westhead. He contacted Branches which sent out emergency service teams to coordinate a new Centre, or, later in the week, to replace a team which had completed their shift. Tom Huntley, Emergency Coordinator of the North York Branch, was made the Red Cross liaison for the Ontario Division at the site on Sunday evening.

St. John Ambulance, which coordinated three of the Centres, normally provides back-up to Ontario's ambulance services, and is trained to operate first aid posts wherever required. The Halton-Peel Corps of St. John were the first to get involved, when one of their divisions came early Sunday morning to the accident site to set up a first aid post. They soon alerted the Halton-Peel Corps Superintendent. As Evacuation Centres opened, Halton-Peel Corps' divisions sent units to operate First Aid posts.

By 06:00, realizing the extent of the emergency, the Halton-Peel Corps called the Provincial Commissioner of Ontario Brigade, Col. J.M. Sutherland, for assistance. He called the Metropolitan Toronto Corps who mobilized later Sunday morning to set up a Control Centre at Sherway Gardens. They were almost immediately asked to open Sherway as an Evacuation Centre, which they did, and when it was closed Sunday evening, were asked to operate Centres at Westwood Secondary School in Malton and Sheridan College, Brampton. Col Sutherland set up the Ontario Brigade Control Centre at Sheridan College, from which he organised shifts of 50-100 St. John volunteers to man the first aid posts at various Centres. Halton-Peel and Metro Corps also had their Control Centres at Sheridan College.

4.3.3. Registration and Inquiry

In the operation of the Evacuation Centres, Registration and Inquiry was very important in controlling who was in the Centres and in tracing missing people. Evacuees were asked to fill out a form provided by the Red Cross and to check out and in with the registration desk whenever they left temporarily, and check out, stating where they were going, if they left permanently. A central registry of names from all the Centres was kept at Red Cross Command and Control. If Registration and Inquiry was established before evacuees arrive, it was much easier to keep out non-evacuees, some of whom caused disruption and even vandalism.

4.3.4. Food Services

The provision of food services was one of the strong points of the Centres. In some cases, particularly at the

International Centre, there was eventually too much food. Food came from many sources. Local stores opened their doors and allowed Centre volunteers to help themselves. Food wholesalers donated mountains of bread, baked goods and sandwich fillings. Church groups, service organizations and individuals made sandwiches, cookies, etc. and brought them in. Restaurants, particularly McDonald's, brought in large quantities of hamburgers, breakfasts and chili. The Salvation Army made sandwiches or bought food and brought it to the Centres. Peel Regional Social Services bought hot dinners from Air Canada's Cara flight kitchens and served the remaining evacuees at the International Centre on Thursday and Friday. The Kinsmen capped a week of tremendous assistance by preparing a full course roast beef dinner served on linen tablecloths and china for the evacuees at the Streetsville Secondary School on Wednesday evening, 14 November, before they were bussed to hotels in Toronto. Whatever else, no one went hungry.

Food preparation and service was either provided by the kitchens at the various schools, with volunteers assisting the regular kitchen staff, or in the case of the International Centre, organised by the Salvation Army, with assistance from the Boy Scouts and the Pathfinders from the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The latter was a difficult task because of the number of people at the Centre and the lack of any kitchen facilities, including refrigeration.

4.3.5. Health Care

Health Care was provided by the St. John Ambulance with assistance from Peel Regional Public Health Nurses. The Public Health Nurses provided nursing care and checked for public health problems, particularly at the International Centre,

where they were on duty 24 hours a day. Halton Regional Public Health Nurses helped at Peel Evacuation Centres on Sunday, and at those in Halton from Monday onwards. Peel Regional Health also provided health inspectors from the Environment section to check for food spoilage as did Halton Regional Health at the Halton Centres.

There were no doctors available at the Centres which made it more difficult to obtain medication for those who did not bring it with them, or ran out. St. John Ambulance personnel had to take a description of the person's condition and of the drug, or an empty bottle, to a pharmacist, who had to contact a doctor to confirm that it was the correct medication. The advice and skills of doctors would have been valuable to help treat those with medical needs.

In Centres established in schools, it was possible to have a separate room for health care in the school health office and a quiet room for people who were sick.

4.3.6. Communications

To facilitate communications, the Red Cross has a formal agreement (signed just days before Mississauga) with the Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) arm of the American Radio Relay League to provide amateur radio communication services, when required, in emergencies. The ARES network were standing by throughout Sunday waiting to be called in. The increasing number of Centres and overloaded phone lines prompted Ken McBride to call ARES at 18:00 hours Sunday for help. By late Sunday evening, there were radio operators in all of the major Centres, and at the accident site and the Command and Control. They were invaluable in providing information transfer between the Command Post and the Evacuation

Centres via Command and Control, particularly in tracking down "missing" evacuees through the Registration and Inquiry system.

The telephone was the other mode of communication and extra lines were put into some of the Centres by Bell Telephone. In the schools the main office was used for phone communications by those in charge. As elsewhere, the phone lines often became overloaded.

The evacuees themselves received information from several sources. Where a P.A. system was available, announcements were made to the evacuees by the organisers as they received word from the Command Post. Many evacuees had radios, and televisions were either made available by the facility itself, or were brought in on loan from local businesses. The major Toronto newspapers were distributed free to the evacuees, as well.

In some cases, evacuees heard reports over the radio and television before those in charge of the Centres heard officially from the Command Post. If the report was wrong (for instance, reporting the wrong area being re-opened), it created confusion for both evacuees and coordinators, until the latter received official confirmation. Rumours were referred to the Red Cross liaison at the site who reported back a denial or confirmation to the Centre once he had carefully checked their veracity. This was then reported to the evacuees.

At one Centre, someone proclaimed to a gym full of people on Tuesday night that everyone could go home - there was a stampede for the doors, and organisers had a difficult time calming people and convincing them that they could not go home after all.

4.3.7. Other Volunteer Services

In the schools, separate rooms were set aside as nurseries for mothers and babies, as playrooms for children, or quiet rooms for people who needed some privacy; gyms were available for recreation; and sleeping and eating quarters could be separated, making life more comfortable for evacuees. Gym mats were used for evacuees to sleep on, and blankets and some sleeping bags were brought into the Centres, primarily loaned by the Canadian Armed Forces. The schools also had adequate washroom facilities, and were able to provide showers to the evacuees. Volunteers helped look after the children, running games and activities for them.

The Salvation Army, as well as running the food service at the International Centre, worked in several Centres offering counselling to those in need, and fetching and bringing in supplies and blankets. They also supplied money and food to families in need who were returning to their homes. The Etobicoke Temple of the Salvation Army, under Major Ken Holbrook, was called in on Sunday evening by the Mississauga Temple's Director, Captain Robert Ratcliffe, to run the food service at the International Centre and assist with the other activities that the Salvation Army was performing at the Centres.

Supplies such as diapers, toothbrushes, soap, etc., were provided free by local stores, or bought by Peel Region Social Services.

Where possible, pets and their owners were put in one section of a Centre. Because blankets were collected each morning, it was important not to redistribute them to non-pet owners who might be allergic. Pet food companies and the members of the St. Francis of Assisi Anglican Church in Meadowvale provided free pet food to the many animals also sheltered in the Centres. Some pets were taken to private boarding

kennels in Oakville, on Wednesday, when people moved to hotels and could not take their animals with them.

Much of the work done in carrying out the functions of the Centres was performed by the Scouts and Guides. The Mississauga Scout leaders were mobilized early Sunday morning by the District Commissioner, Frank Holt. They first went to a Streetsville church to make sandwiches for the personnel at the accident site and to help out at the Erindale Secondary School. They later moved on to the Streetsville and Brampton Centres, often being there early enough to help set up. Mississauga Scouts also opened their Ravasac Camp in the Hockley Valley to shelter some families from the Evacuation Centres.

Early Sunday evening, November 11, the Brampton Scouts under District Commissioner Tony Noronha, reported to the Brampton Centre to assist, and set up their own Evacuation Centre at the Brampton Scout House. The Brampton Legion supplied food, and St. John Ambulance sent a first aid team and blankets over from Sheridan College. The Brampton Legion provided food to the Centre, which looked after more than 100 people at its peak.

At the same time the Brampton Scouts were moving into the Brampton Centres, Mike Sharples, Director of the Malton District, moved a team into the International Centre. The Scouts were the first volunteer group there and set up and ran the Centre until the Red Cross came later in the evening. The Scouts worked tirelessly all week at the Centre. On Wednesday night, Frank Holt called the Provincial Office, which sent in Scouts from the west sub-region of the Greater Toronto Region and from York Summit to help the exhausted Malton crew. Holt acted as the overall coordinator of Scout operations, arranging for replacement shifts and making sure no Scouts went longer than 12 hours without sleep.