

MPP Walt Elliot joins ministry of housing

With housing demands rapidly increasing across the province, North Halton MPP Walt Elliot said it is a "significant time" to be appointed parliamentary assistant to the minister of housing.

Mr. Elliot received his appointment last week. He will begin his role under Housing Minister John Sweeney when Queen's Park parliament resumes Oct. 10.

Major housing projects in Georgetown and Milton are "ready to roll," Mr. Elliot said. He said he can bring a North Halton perspective to the provincial office.



Walt Elliot

Reflecting on North Halton's needs, the MPP said: "We have a lot of people up there who would like to buy a house. We have to make sure that there are houses."

Mr. Elliot's appointment falls in the wake of a major shake-up at Queen's Park where Ontario

Premier David Peterson dismissed eight cabinet ministers. The provincial cabinet was reduced from 31 to 27 members.

The MPP said in a release to the local media that he was "looking forward to the many new challenges that the position (of parliamentary assistant to the ministry of housing) will bring with it."

But Friday he said it is "premature" to speculate on what action he would take in his new role.

Ontario will have to find accommodation for two million people in the next decade, Mr. Elliot said. Half of these people will be from the greater Toronto area.

The "big challenge" over the next few years for North Halton will be to ensure that growth is "controlled." The MPP said all of Halton Region is experiencing rapid growth.

Mr. Elliot is presently chairman of the standing committee on general government. For the past year he has been chairman of the Liberal caucus sub-committee on waste management and the environment and served on the economic policy committee and the rural caucus of the Liberal Party at Queen's Park.

In his first year at Queen's Park, Mr. Elliot served on the Select Committee on Constitutional Reform, as vice-president of the standing committee of the Ombudsman, and as chairman of the South Western Ontario Caucus of the Liberal Party.

Halton to study tax system

Halton Region gave the green light to a two-year study that could mean market value tax assessment for this Region.

Regional councillors voted 15 to 5 in favor of implementing the Ontario Ministry of Revenue tax study. The study could lead to a tax system that would mean equal payment of Regional and education taxes for properties of equal value.

But Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale said the councillors who voted for the tax study this week likely won't be in Regional office when the study results come back to Regional councillors.

"We can all vote for it because it's not going to come back to us," she said. "I think we should make the public aware of this."

Mayor Mulvale said last week that some Oakville residents would oppose the Region-wide assessment because it would mean increases in their annual residence tax. "I expressed some concerns at the committee (meeting) and I still have those concerns," she said.

Halton Hills Coun. Joe Hewitt was not at the council meeting for the vote. Coun. Bill Johnson of Milton and Milton Mayor Gord Krantz were also absent.

The introduction of the impact study fell on the same day that Metro Toronto approved market value assessment for the Toronto area. That study cost the province \$98 million.

Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy said last week that provincial funding to the tax study could be cut in as soon as 18 months. He urged Regional councillors to approve the study, which would not mean approving market value assessment.

But Ministry of the Treasurer representative Robert Beach said most municipalities who undergo the tax study approve the market value tax assessment.

The tax impact study program

was first introduced in 1978 "to resolve assessment and tax inequities," a ministry report says.

There are 668 municipalities and school boards across Ontario on a market value assessment system.

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