

# Boards hike development charges

By **TIM WHITNELL**  
Metroland Media Group

Despite strong objections from some area construction industry and government officials, Halton's public and Catholic school boards have approved significant increases to their Education Development Charges (EDCs), the tool by which they raise money to build new schools.

At the recent meeting of the Halton Catholic board, trustees approved an amendment to its current five-year EDCs bylaw, which was formulated in 2009 and expires in June 2014.

The Halton Catholic board will now charge homebuilders \$1,159 per residential unit, up \$338 or 41 per cent over the previous charge of \$821 per unit.

The Halton Catholic board's EDC for developers of non-residential (commercial/industrial/institutional) lands will now be 32 cents per square foot or \$3.44 per square metre, up nine cents or 39 per cent from the previous charge of 23 cents per sq. ft. or \$2.47 per sq. m.

The Halton public board raised its EDC rates by almost the same percentages at its June 15 board meeting.

The Halton public board now charges land developers \$2,506 per new dwelling, a 43 per cent increase, and 69 cents per square foot (\$7.43 per square metre) of gross floor area for non-residential units/buildings, a 41 per cent increase.

That means the combined EDC charge for the two Halton school boards is now \$3,665 per residential unit and \$1.01 per sq. ft. (\$10.87 per sq. m.) for non-residential units.

The combined rate increases of the Halton Catholic and public board EDCs are likely to be tacked on in full to the purchase price of new homes/buildings, although some organizations are always or often exempt from paying EDCs, like churches and school boards.

"Obviously, we always have concerns when EDCs rise dramatically," said Doug Duke, executive officer with the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association. "It's a further erosion of (new) home affordability and the ultimate question is, Where is it going to stop?"



**DOUG PENRICE**

EDCs are collected by municipalities on behalf of school boards and are payable at the time a building permit is issued.

Residential and non-residential EDCs are usually comprised of several components—the rates charged by towns/cities, regions, school boards and GO Transit.

The Halton Catholic board says it had to raise its residential and non-residential EDC rates by 41 and 39 per cent respectively because it is facing much higher land acquisition and site development costs associated with building new schools.

Doug Penrice, the economic development officer for Halton Hills, wrote a letter to the Halton Catholic board requesting the increase to non-residential EDCs remain at the previous level until more information is gained through an economic development study currently being conducted by Halton Region.

"The economy remains fragile and the attraction of new non-residential development in Halton Hills continues to be challenging," wrote Penrice. "Halton Hills has responded to these challenges by discounting non-residential (industrial only) development charges by almost 60 per cent to encourage growth in our sector..."

The Building and Land Development Association (BILD) asked Catholic trustees to defer passage of its much higher EDC rates until BILD reps had a closer look at the board's EDC reports and rationale behind the increases.

"I'm sympathetic but we have to have money to (build) new schools," countered school board chair Alice Anne LeMay.

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