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NEWS

STEADY FLOW OF SENIORS LEAVING COMMUNITY HAS UNSPOKEN EFFECTS

Continued from page 1

Acton are familiar to us," said Broostad, explaining that she doesn't really want to move away from the community that she has lived in the majority of her life.

Last year, Broostad was nominated Citizen of the Year by the Acton Rotary Club for her long-standing commitment to the town, and countless hours of service with a number of local groups like Links2Care, the YMCA and more.

Now, as her husband Lloyd faces some medical and mobility challenges, the couple has been faced with a tough decision. They are moving to a retirement residence in Guelph.

"The dream is to stay in your home until the very last," she said, noting that sometimes, that is not the reality. After signing up for wait lists for the local assisted living residence in town, Broostad realized that she and her husband simply couldn't wait for their names to be called.

Last month, she said she called and learned they were calling people that had been on the wait list since 2013. Broostad isn't alone in her predicament.

Debra Hayes has lived in Georgetown for 22 years with her husband. "We can't afford to stay here," said the semi-retired homeowner who plans on downsizing.

"We have to leave." She and her husband have searched for condos and apartments in town and have not been able to find an affordable option for their retirement.

"We even looked at the McGibbon," she said. Hayes says the steady flow of seniors leaving the community has un-

spoken effects.

"Seniors do most of the volunteer work in town," she said, noting that fundraisers and volunteer led programs will suffer as this generation seeks housing elsewhere.

"We would like to stay in town, we really would, we like Georgetown," said Hayes.

A recent Leger online survey asked over 1,000 baby boomers in Canada about their plans to downsize in retirement and found that 56 per cent felt they can't afford to downsize in their own communities.

In Ontario, 40 per cent of respondents said they would be willing to move away from their current communities to find affordable housing.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette says the issue of seniors' housing has been a concern for the town for years and there are multiple units on the way.

He says that there are currently 263 seniors' units and 45 'bungalow' townhouses either in planning stages or awaiting construction in Acton and Georgetown.

"Acton is different," he said. "A lot of it, we're hamstrung, the town is greenbelted."

He says the town is reliant on infill development in Acton, like the 108-unit development at 125 McDonald Blvd. In that project, the developer has allocated for 20 bungalow townhouses.

"Bungaloffs are usually built and marketed to

empty-nesters and seniors," said the mayor, noting that for Acton to build a new project like the Legion apartments, would be difficult due to land constraints.

The region of Halton accepted proposals for affordable housing projects this year, and one proposal for a development in Acton was submitted.

Both projects to receive funding were located in Milton, but there was one expression of interest submitted for 93 Mill St. in Acton, by Acton Medical Care Ltd. for eight to 16 two-bedroom units.

In order to qualify for the funding, the applicants would have to prove that they could meet key milestones and get a building permit, which would have taken rezoning for the area.

The region says that the applicants were looking at other options for the development and the use of the site. As for Broostad, she's shocked that the exact problems she foresaw years ago simply aren't solved.

"We still have nothing for seniors," she said. "This is where they want to stay."

As she packs away decades worth of fine china and crystal glasses, she ponders what she can take with her to the new home in Guelph.

"All levels of government have to help us with this situation," she said. "They have to go all over to find a place to live."

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