

ODSP RECIPIENTS FACE OBSTACLES TO FUNDING

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and individuals in search of independent living.

"It's pretty much a problem everywhere, but definitely it's a problem in Halton," said Stewart.

And the problem is getting worse, as the numbers of individuals and families living on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) in Halton has grown by almost 1,000 over the past five years.

"We are seeing that there hasn't been any new wheelchair-accessible housing that's affordable built since Deborah's Home was built in 1995," added Stewart.

Within each new subdivision, Stewart believes there should be a "reasonable percentage of new builds built to a universal

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- Keith, single dad with three children on ODSP

code rather than just the standard code."

"There is a universal access building code, but you need municipalities to utilize it and to get builders to be cooperative or mandated. If builders want to build, then I think the municipalities have some political capital they could use with the builders."

Not only is support housing for those with developmental disabilities in short supply, ODSP covers only about half of clients'

costs, said Stewart.

"It's a fairly common experience for those with special needs, what ODSP can provide will only cover half of what it will actually cost you," said Stewart.

Deborah's Home residents pay a minimum of \$134 per month. Without that advantage, individuals, who receive slightly more than \$1,100 monthly on the provincial social assistance program, would be looking at commercial market rents. There are

many variables, rules and restrictions which can cause the monthly ODSP amount to bounce around. One of those is employment.

Matt, who is married and the father of a three-year-old daughter, almost lost his ODSP when he accrued too many hours at work. His family receives about \$2,000 in monthly assistance. Now that he works part-time, he is responsible for \$400 towards his rent; if he works full-time, that figure doubles. The rest of the money goes towards bills and the necessities of life.

"It's tight. We just do the best we can. I just want to survive; I don't want to go in debt," said the 43-year-old who is deaf and lives with learning and language disabilities.

For many years, Keith was a single dad raising three kids on ODSP. His two older children are now out of the house but his youngest, 13, remains.

"It's a struggle being on it," said Keith, 51, who has a mild form of cerebral palsy, which has kept him on disability support since he was 18.

"I'm in geared-to-income housing, so that helps. If I were to pay market rent, I'd be in trouble. If you're living strictly on disability, you could never live in a market rent situation."

Being employed gives Keith a sense of purpose and dignity, he said, but even with a bit of extra income from his minimum wage job, he's hard pressed to pay all his bills in full every month.

"It's tight. It's just not enough a month to pay them off completely, like I'm always owing money to bills. What they expect a single person to live on this day and age is nowhere near close enough. You can't survive on disability alone and that's why I took a job; it gives me extra money but not a lot. If we didn't have geared-to-income housing, people on disability would all be homeless," said Keith.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With the number of Halton residents living on the Ontario Disability Support Program having risen dramatically in recent years, we wanted to explore the hardships facing these people, as well as ask what could be done to improve the situation.

QUEEN ST. SET FOR RECONSTRUCTION

BRYAN MYERS
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Queen Street in Acton will undergo reconstruction from Young St. to Churchill Rd. beginning in the spring as part of the Town of Halton Hills' annual pavement management program.

The roadway recon-

struction will include full removal and replacement of asphalt and curbs as well as storm sewer repairs.

A pedestrian crossing, with signal, will be installed at the intersection of Queen St. and Acton Blvd.

"The Queen St. reconstruction project in Acton

is part of the Town's annual pavement management and capital works construction program," said Mayor Rick Bonnette.

"Ongoing ROADS 2021 projects are designed to renew and improve infrastructure across Halton Hills and we apologise in advance for any traffic

delays or impacts caused by the work."

Driveways and grassed areas damaged by the roadwork will be restored with topsoil and sod.

Should roads projects be delayed, residents will receive a hand-delivered notice from the Town explaining the details of the delay.



Town of Halton Hills photo
A section of Queen St. will undergo reconstruction this spring.

Luciano & Sarah would like to thank all the members of our store team for all their hard work and dedication over the past year. Thank you for helping us to take care and serve our great community!



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