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lever that's going to have a direct 100-per-cent correlation to pricing. I would say the primary item impacting housing prices is an imbalance in supply and demand across all of southern Ontario," said Collins-Williams.

To put it simply, there are more people looking for homes in Halton than there are homes available on the market. That supply and demand problem is at the centre of the issue, but there are other factors at play.

For example, one unforeseen side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was a steep increase in the cost of lumber. That increase is expected to level off, but builders report the cost of

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- Mike Collins-Williams

wood resulted in as much as a \$40,000 increase to the cost of construction for a single-family home.

There's also longer-term factors, including a shortage in skilled tradespeople and a general flight away from denser parts of the Greater Toronto Area toward places like Halton.

It's all combined to bring the cost of a house to remarkable heights.

"For better or for worse, that means people with the most resources win those

bidding wars and that is pushing the price of housing up significantly. I think a good example would be, from 2010 to 2015, the population of Ontario increased by about 600,000.

"In the next five years, 2015 to 2020, the population increased by a million, yet the number of housing units built stayed virtually the same in each of those periods," said Collins-Williams.

Government officials have recognized the issue the pricing has created. Halton Regional Council approved a 10-year Comprehensive Housing Strategy to help address the need in the community by setting aside \$107 million to create new housing op-

portunities.

Andrew Balahura, director of housing services with Halton Region and chief operating officer of Halton Community Housing Corporation (HCHC), said housing costs need to be dealt with.

"It is important to address housing affordability in order to ensure that our region continues to be socially and economically diverse. We need to retain our young people in the region, ensure that an appropriate mix of housing is available for Halton residents of all incomes and that the forms of housing made available address demographic needs," said Balahura.

HCHC is the largest provider of assisted and affordable housing in the region with a portfolio of 2,210 units.

The demand for affordable housing in the region is so great that, despite having all those units, there are currently over 3,000 applicants on the or-

HALTON REAL ESTATE BY THE NUMBERS

Median total income of households (2016 Census)					
Oakville	\$113,666				
Halton Hills	\$106,349				
Milton	\$104,730				
Halton Average	\$103,009				
Burlington	\$93,588				
Total Unit Sales (MPAC Sales Data) 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019					
Oakville	4,523	5,303	4,917	4,296	3,832
Halton Hills	1,095	1,332	1,196	971	1,104
Milton	2,981	3,191	3,193	2,951	3,380
Halton Average	12,739	13,702	12,874	11,423	11,724
Burlington	4,140	3,876	3,568	3,204	3,408
Average Sale Price (MPAC Sales Data) 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019					
Oakville	\$757,053	\$903,660	\$1,006,258	\$988,323	\$1,034,221
Halton Hills	\$541,719	\$613,374	\$714,876	\$730,354	\$783,403
Milton	\$524,392	\$597,154	\$648,680	\$649,329	\$711,918
Halton Average	\$614,554	\$727,467	\$816,320	\$802,931	\$835,069
Burlington	\$543,058	\$632,897	\$738,593	\$717,931	\$750,017

ganization's wait-list.

Balahura said the current housing price situation is partly a result of just how successful Halton has been.

"Housing isn't just about bricks and mortar — its bigger than that.

"It's about safe, secure communities; it's about economic and socially diverse communities; it's about having a sense of

place, and I think one of the reasons so many people outside of Halton are demanding to come here is because we have that," said Balahura.

He believes addressing this demand would require a long list of changes, including dedicated funding support from higher levels of government and more purpose-built rental housing.

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