

Affordable Housing Initiative to help Canadians in need

By ANN KORNUA

On March 24, in Halton the Federal Minister of Labour and Housing announced that programs to supplement rental housing would be eligible under the Affordable Housing Initiative. This announcement comes at the same time as data is released showing that Milton/Halton Hills has an average of only 1.4% in rental vacancies. Statistically, a healthy community with a population close to that of Milton/Halton Hills should be around 4% for rental vacancy.

"Today's announcement will help Canadians most in need, including low income seniors, persons with disabilities and new Canadians who live in cities with high vacancy rates," said M.P. Gary Carr.

This Affordable Housing Initiative will invest \$1.8 billion by 2008 towards building new affordable housing units, and services for the homeless. It will also encourage the renovation of existing houses for social housing programs. Rental supplements give low-income families the opportunity to afford rental properties.

Before this initiative, funding for housing was limited to capital expenditures such as building new housing units. The Provinces have argued that that this limitation to capital expenditure restricts their ability to use the federal funding and prevents them from making the best of existing housing stocks.

Not in their backyard Hawthorne Village residents upset over proposed apartment building

By ANN KORNUA

Residents of Milton's Hawthorne Village South are unhappy at the proposed construction of a new apartment building in the suburban community. The residents are strongly opposed to the apartment building and feel that they've been misled, even though the fact that the land in question is zoned as "residential/office" has been on display at Milton Town hall since 1997.

"EVEN PEOPLE WHO ARE BUYING TODAY HAVE NO IDEA. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THERE TO SAY YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE APARTMENT BUILDINGS NEXT TO YOU."

Chad Jackson, a resident of Hawthorn Village (which abuts the site of the proposed apartment building) spoke out about the situation. "One of the main concerns to us was that we were misled by Mattamy Homes and essentially the Town of Milton about what was going to be around us," Mr. Jackson said. "Based on that, there was a considerable surprise to everyone about the plans for this apartment building. The people of Hawthorn Village South are not interested in having that across from them. We are concerned about the traffic and the quality of life."

Some residents of Hawthorne Village had paid a \$5 thousand dollar premium to the builder as part of the purchase price of their homes. Mr. Jackson said, "We paid that kind of money in the belief that we were going to be guaranteed a nice rural, low density community. There are no actions we can take with Mattamy Homes, but we want to maintain the kind of environment we live in so we have to let you know that you have to plan better. Town Council mention that there was information posted in sales offices, we have since checked that out, and Mattamy does not have any information about this apartment building at all. Even people who are buying today have no idea. There are no signs there to say you are going to have apartment buildings next to you." Mr. Jackson said.

Councillor Wendy Schau of Ward 4 who also sits on the Affordable Housing Coalition came out in support of the Town's

original plan made in 1997. She explained that Milton currently sits at a rental vacancy of an unhealthy 1.4% leaving the issue of affordable housing in desperate need for assessment. Statistically a healthy community should have a rental vacancy of 4%. "This is in the official plan of Milton that was written in 1997. Any new development is based on this plan. I think it is important that people know that because I sometimes get the feeling that people think it's unorganized." This particular property on Derry and Fourth Line is zoned for residential and office area. Anything built on there must have a minim of 70 living density for hectare and a minim density of 100 units per hectare. A medium sized apartment block would work well for the land and zone of the area. Wendy mentioned that as the town grows with accordance with the Town's Official plan and believes that the Derry Fourth Line area is a "good" location for an apartment building. "The area fits the Town Plan that new development areas have a mix of different types of residential housing and commercial uses so that people can walk, take public transit or bike to meet their needs instead of taking a car." Wendy pointed out. She also noted that the corner of Derry and Fourth Line is a good location because it is on Milton's transit services and GO Bus routes. What people can expect to see is an attractive five to seven storey apartment building, much like the ones along Upper Middle Rd. in Oakville.

THE DERRY FOURTH LINE AREA IS A "GOOD" LOCATION FOR AN APARTMENT BUILDING.

"I think it is very important that people understand that the official plan exists and that the new development is governed by what is in the official plan. I feel (the Town Official Plan) it is very well thought out and follows the principles for the new Provincial legislation where it talks about intensification, walk able communities, and making the best use of our existing infrastructure." Wendy Schau said.

On a point of clarification the land in question is not owned or controlled by Mattamy Homes.

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