

Halton's poor struggle to find affordable shelter - FCM Report

Most people in Halton Region enjoy a high standard of living, according to a quality of life report released recently by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), but there is still lots of work to be done to improve the quality of life for those with household incomes insufficient to cover food and shelter costs.

Rising shelter costs across Canada especially are making some of Canada's large urban areas too expensive for those on low incomes, the report finds.

Low vacancy rates, rents with dramatic increases and long waiting lists for social housing are the result of a 50 percent drop in rental housing construction in the decade between 1991 and 2001, the FCM report maintains. The gap between rents and incomes widened to the point where rents generally are unaffordable for those low incomes.

The report covered 20 municipalities across Canada.

In Halton, over the last ten years, more people with low incomes, such as sole support parents, youth, seniors and the working poor, are spending over 30 per cent of their income on shelter, leaving insufficient funds for other necessities.

"Halton remains a great place to live and work for most people," said Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline. "However, Halton faces the same challenges as other Canadian municipalities when it comes to lack of affordable housing and homelessness. It is time for action - all levels of government need to work together to find solutions to this housing crisis, and we need to start now."

Poverty is an issue affecting many communities as the gap between rich and poor widens. Halton, which enjoys one of the highest median family incomes in Canada, is not spared. In fact, someone who is poor by Canadian standards is relatively much further be-

low the overall community standard in Halton, the report suggests.

A separate report released by FCM last week, "Moving Forward: Refining the FCM Recommendations for a National Affordable Housing Strategy," calls for a national housing strategy. The shortage of affordable housing can be attributed to the lack of new construction, slowness in mobilizing funds from the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Affordable Housing Program and a loss of existing affordable housing, it concludes.

"Municipal governments, already struggling in the face of shrinking resources and growing responsibilities, cannot respond to this growing need on their own," says Ann MacLean, president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The purpose of the reports is to provide the objective data needed to inform citizens and policy makers in all orders of government of the true state of those factors that contribute to quality of life.

Both reports are available on FCM's website at www.fcm.ca.



BREAK TIME: Robert and Bradley Rowe of rural Georgetown took a break during the free skating session at Acton arena on Sunday. Dad Robert said they'd been to Acton arena four times since Christmas, mainly because Bradley, 4, likes the leisure pad. - Frances Niblock photo

Decorated Yule trees sign of vanity - Jeremiah

To whom it might concern:

Re: the article on Christmas trees in The New Tanner of Dec. 23, 2004

"For the customs of the peoples are futile (vanity). For one cuts a tree from the forest. The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple." Jeremiah 10:3-4.

W. Fountain,
R.R.1, Acton.

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