

# Bridge housing gap—resident

**MELANIE HENNESSEY**  
Special to The IFP

There's a desperate need to bridge the affordable housing gap in Halton.

This was the message Halton Hills resident Crystal Orvis delivered to the Region's health and social services committee last week as she shared her story about her plight for local inexpensive housing.

Several years ago when Orvis first became a single mom of two young children, she needed to find a place to live that fit her budget.

She managed to secure a small two-bedroom apartment to rent in Georgetown for \$850 a month, and after that part of a rental home in Acton for \$910 a month.

Little did she know that her problems had just begun in the Acton home, as the first winter revealed it was barely insulated. Combine that with other problems like mould and a leaky roof, and things looked pretty dismal for the Orvis family.

"Our struggle continued on and on," she said.

But Orvis' prayers were answered in 2006 when she found out she and her children had been chosen as the recipients of a Habitat for Humanity Home in Georgetown.

"It was a dream come true," she said emotionally. "Now, for the first time, my children and I are home."

While things may be easier for Orvis these days, she's still pursuing the affordable housing issue as a participant in Halton's 'Voices for Housing Choices' initiative, a panel of community members who are helping put a human face on local housing needs.

"We need affordable housing in this community," Orvis said. "There is a gap. We must come up with a way to bridge that gap."

The Region is in the process of implementing its Comprehensive Housing Strategy, which aims to address Halton's housing needs until 2015.

The committee took things one step further last week in suggesting something should be done to make a vacant subdivision in Oakville available for affordable housing.

The estimated 80 to 90 homes that sit at the northwest corner of Dorval Drive and Rebecca Street are owned the Department of National Defence (DND).

While the property has been declared surplus to the department's needs, Halton Commissioner of Social and Community Services Adelina Urbanski said staff can't get a clear answer on what the next steps in the process entail.

Oakville Councillor Jeff Knoll suggested approaching the DND with a proposal, noting it's a "crying shame" to have the homes just sitting there empty when so many people need affordable housing.

"I don't think people understand the disgrace this is," he said.

Halton Hills Councillor Clark Somerville recommended getting the local MPs onside with the initiative.

Milton Councillor Colin Best made a motion authorizing staff to create such a proposal to help secure either temporary or permanent housing on the lands to address Halton's needs. It also calls for the item to be circulated to the region's MPs. The committee supported the resolution.

The matter will go before regional council today (Wednesday) for consideration.

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The Region will host an awards ceremony tonight (Wednesday), when the winners of the first annual 'Be a Hero. Be a Voice for Affordable Housing' contest will be announced.

The contest saw students in Grades 10 to 12 create everything from videos to newspaper editorials to posters designed to raise awareness of the need for more affordable housing in Halton.

The ceremony will run from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn at 590 Argus Rd., Oakville.



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Dr. Todd Murphy is a licensed Psychologist, registered with the College of Psychologists of Ontario. He works with both individuals and couples in the fields of Clinical and Counselling Psychology.

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