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Halton looks for solutions

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cash. That would be used as one-time stopgap for those who face eviction due to circumstances such as illness.

Emergency shelter beds should be purchased with \$40,000 of the provincial cash, while another \$10,000 could be used to launch an assisted housing survey.

A new business?

The survey would allow the Region to collect data on residents who are currently living in substandard accommodations.

Some of the report's recommendations had Burlington Councillor Linda Schreiber wondering if Halton was going into a new business.

"Are we becoming housing providers now?" she asked.

Halton has always had a program to help those in crisis, the Region's community services commissioner, Adelina Urbanski responded.

Putting money aside for emergency beds — and creating an inventory of where they are most needed —

would just streamline the process, she added.

"It's basically if someone doesn't have anywhere to

go, it's right away. It's immediate," said Ms Urbanski. Oakville Councillor Kathy Graham said the report should be viewed as a starting point only.

"This has to be strengthened," she said. "I don't think Halton wants to be perceived as sending its homeless down to Toronto."

Halton should be able to take care of its residents within the community, said Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale.

More money needed

"If we can't shelter our people, that makes a very negative comment on our society," she said.

Adding muscle to the recommendations would require more funding from the Province, said Oakville Councillor Kurt Franklin.

"The \$150,000 is like trying to kill an elephant with a pea-shooter," he said.

"We need to send a stronger message to the Province."

The problem at a glance

Homelessness in Halton is a reality for youth, women, children of abused women and the mentally ill, according to a consultant's report entitled Homelessness in Halton: A Hidden Issue.

Community agencies reported that 825 women and children were homeless in Halton last year. Of those, 454 were abused.

Additionally, more than 400 Halton women were described as living in unsafe or at-risk homes.

The report also showed that 168 youths and 200 people with mental illnesses were in need of shelter in 1998.

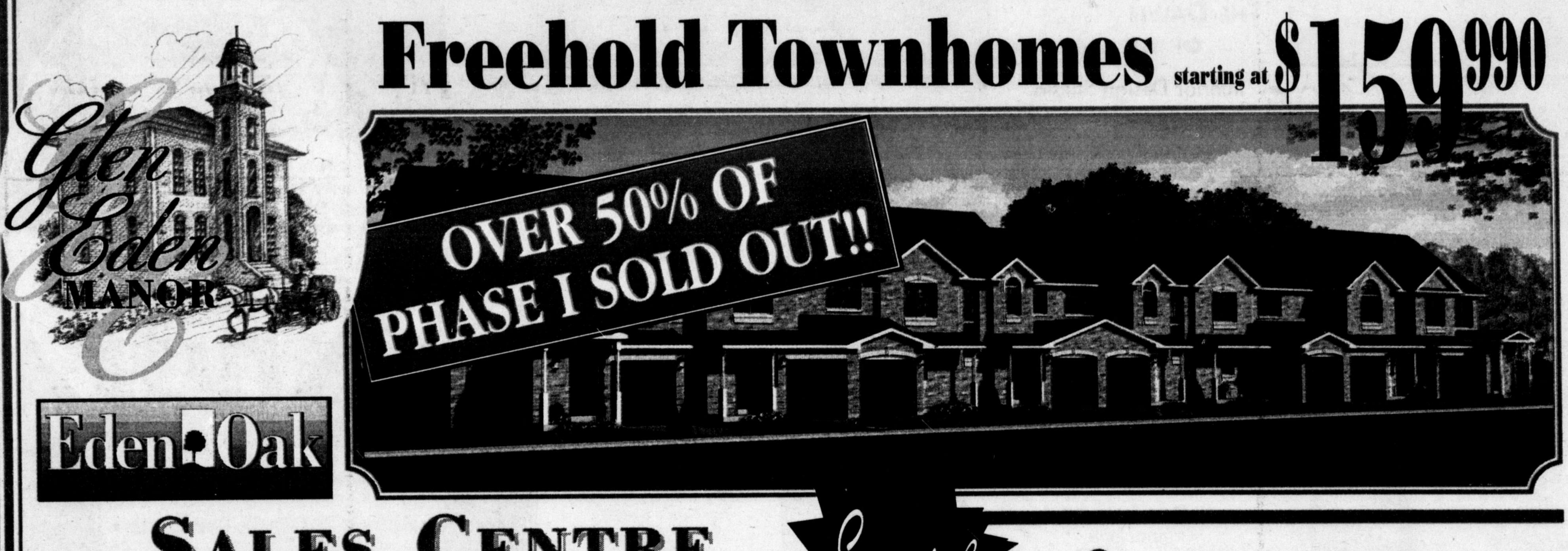
Seniors, men and families in which abuse is not a

factor may face homelessness in the future, the report showed.

Though 51 seniors were classified as homeless last year, a further 307 were found to be living in unsafe or at-risk accommodations. Also, 441 families were living in unstable or risky homes in 1998. Another 39 were considered homeless.

While 51 men found themselves in need of a shelter last year, a full 171 were found to be living in unstable homes.

About 280 developmentally challenged residents were waiting for suitable accommodation last year, while 16 more were considered homeless.



42 Bronte Street (South of Main St.)

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