

# Few options for seniors who live by themselves

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fixed income. Poor physical and mental health, separation from family or friends, transportation and mobility problems as well as language barriers can combine to put seniors at risk of poor living conditions.

But skyrocketing costs contribute to the difficulties of finding suitable shelter.

According to the ESAC report, there are 37,435 seniors living in Halton, or about 11 per cent of the total population.

Of those, more than 50 per cent live on incomes of \$20,000 or less. Just under 15 per cent live below the poverty line, calculated as \$14,473 for single seniors.

With an income of \$20,000, affordable housing would cost \$500 monthly or less -- or 30 per cent of total earnings.

But the average rent in Halton is \$806.

The result is 28 per cent of all Halton seniors spend more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter.

But that number soars when it comes to single seniors living in poverty.

Of those, 64 per cent of homeowners and 43 per cent of renters lay down more than 30 per cent of their income on putting a roof over their heads.

And if affordability isn't an issue, accessibility may be. Problems with mobility can prevent some seniors from accessing the second floor of a home. And narrow doors and hallways can seal off entire areas to the wheelchair dependent. But even the nimble-minded and able-bodied are facing a housing crunch, said Mr. Gesner.

"ESAC is also aware there is a lack of options for seniors who live independently but for some reason want to downsize," said Dr. Gesner.

The committee endorsed the ESAC report, calling for the group to return within a year with more information.

In the meantime, committee approved a recommendation to involve developers and other levels of government in the debate.

# One person asleep in bedroom when fire breaks out in kitchen

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The person in the basement escaped without injury.

Captain Cross said it looks like the fire was started by an unattended candle.

A home on Laurier Avenue isn't livable after a pot on the stove caught fire January 29.

"Kitchen fires are the number one cause of house fires, followed by careless smoking," Captain Cross said.

Two people were in the home when the kitchen caught fire. One person had to wake up another occupant who was sleeping in an upstairs bedroom.

The smoke alarm in the upstairs bedroom was disconnected.

"Disaster was narrowly averted," Captain Cross said.


Neighbours using buckets of water and snow were able to put out most of the fire before the fire department arrived.

Although Captain Cross commended the neighbours for helping stop the fire, "the best thing for people to do is get out of the house, phone 911 and never go back inside. People who go in, usually don't

come back out."

There was fire damage in the kitchen and heavy smoke damage throughout the rest of the house.

No damage estimate was available.

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