

Funds don't help region's affordable housing woes

By PAUL MITCHISON
Special to The Champion

Halton Region is receiving \$1.4 million for social housing, but it won't build a single new apartment or townhouse unit.

The money from the Province is to be spent on capital improvements and administration costs for public housing programs. In Halton, since 1998, municipal taxes have provided subsidies amounting to \$34 million annually, an obligation no longer shared by the Province.

Gwen Maloney, director of Halton's Non-profit Housing Corporation division, said the funds, while welcome, don't tackle the shortage of affordable housing.

"It's really got nothing to do with what it costs to build, it's just that we've got to put administrative systems in place."

A desperate shortage of affordable housing in Burlington and the rest of the region continues to exist, she said.

"There's no money there for new construction — what we'd really like is for the federal and provincial governments to get back into the housing business."

Between the Halton Non-Profit Housing Corporation and Halton Housing Authority there are cur-

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rently 1,820 housing units, apartments and townhouses providing shelter for disabled residents, seniors, families on social assistance and the working poor.

Rents in most of those units are subsidized by municipal taxpayers so they don't exceed 30 per cent of a household income. On top of these subsidized units, there are also about 2,200 lower-cost housing units available between privately-owned co-ops and non-profit projects.

But it still doesn't come close to meeting the need in Halton, where there are 1,800 names on a waiting list to get into Halton's subsidized housing and where some families can expect to wait up to seven years.

Untold numbers currently leave Halton and end up in either Hamilton or Toronto in order to

find affordable housing, she said. Others stay with families and friends or "fall into worse and worse situations."

The provincial government recently downloaded the responsibility for planning and delivery of social housing services. On top of that, responsibility for most federally-funded social housing was transferred to the Province under a federal/provincial social housing agreement in November, 1999. According to a provincial government news release, \$29.5 million will be provided across Ontario for entitlements of the employees who were transferred from provincial to the municipal level.

About \$6 million will be given for what the Province describes as start-up costs, \$9 million for efficiencies in administration, technology, staff training, business realignment and other costs.

The Province will also be distributing a further \$58 million in federal funding related to the federal housing program. These funds can be used for building, reviews, capital repairs and other social housing purposes.

The Province will also provide municipalities with an additional \$8 million for a new computerized property management system that will help them manage social housing more efficiently.



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MDH Information Now Available Online



Halton Healthcare

Milton District Hospital has officially joined the online world. Halton Healthcare Services' new web site, www.haltonhealthcare.com, contains information about both HHS hospitals, Milton District Hospital and Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

The site gives those with computers easy access to HHS information in one convenient location. "We are very excited to offer our community another source of information about their hospital," said Cindy McDonnell, Chief Operating Officer at MDH. "We also offer everyone a way to get their questions or concerns answered by providing a Comments button on every page." By clicking on the Comments button your question or concern is sent via email to the HHS Public Relations office. All queries are answered either by the Public Relations Department or forwarded to the appropriate staff member.

The web site is also playing an important role in recruiting. HHS is actively recruiting nurses, physicians and other healthcare professionals. Currently in Milton, there are no family physicians accepting new patients. However, HHS is actively recruiting for new physicians for the area. The web site is viewed as a valuable tool to assist in the recruitment efforts.

What sort of information is available at www.haltonhealthcare.com?

Programs and Services - Looking for a complete summary of the services offered at MDH? The Programs and Services pages offer an overview of what is available in Diagnostic Imaging, Obstetrics, Surgical, Medical, Rehabilitation and Geriatric Services at MDH.

Career Opportunities - Looking for a job in the

healthcare field? This section is a summary of the types of positions available at Halton Healthcare Services. The user has the option of applying online for a position.

Visiting our Hospital - Do you know someone who is a patient a MDH? On the Visiting our Hospital page you will find everything you need to know before visiting the hospital. Information such as visiting hours, general visiting guidelines, cafeteria hours, vending machine locations, Gift Shop hours, pastoral services and accessibility initiatives for the deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing.

Need a Doctor? - Looking for a family physician? Presently there are no doctors accepting new patients, however, keep an eye on this section where you can find names and numbers of family physicians accepting new patients. Information on HHS recruitment efforts for physicians can be found in the Career Opportunities section.

Fundraising - Would you like to make a donation to your community hospital? The MDH Foundation is responsible for generating and administering all charitable gifts to the hospital. On the fundraising page, you will find information on foundation events and how to donate to the hospital.

Volunteering - Interested in volunteering? At MDH, the auxiliary works to enhance the services the hospital provides. For more information about the Auxiliary's fundraising activities, the Junior Volunteers or if you are interested in donating your time to the hospital, check out these pages.

What's Happening? - A listing of all current articles and press releases about HHS.

Other information available online includes a complete HHS Board of Directors and Senior Management listing, phone numbers and health education events. So next time you need some information about MDH, OTMH or HHS, be sure to check out our website at www.haltonhealthcare.com!

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www.haltonhealthcare.com