

Region denies further cuts to GO transit charges

Hopes for reduction go unanswered by Region

By RICHARD VIVIAN
The Champion

Calls for further reductions in GO Transit development charges fell silent Wednesday, paving the way for regional council to approve a new \$738 charge.

"I wouldn't say we're 100 per cent satisfied (with the amount of the charge)," said Jim Murphy, director of government relations for the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association.

"The alternative would have been to say as an association 'We will appeal this bylaw.' Well, that has a cost to it and you don't know what the results will be either way."

The \$738 charge — based on a single, detached unit — came into affect yesterday.

Development applications submitted previously are exempt, providing permits are approved prior to January 16.

Funds collected through the charge will be used to pay for GO Transit service expansions needed to meet the requirements of new residents.

Reduction requested

Mr. Murphy — joined by representatives from the Urban Development Institute and the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association — called on the Halton administration and finance committee to reduce the charges to \$698.85 last week.

Since that time, regional staff have been working with the organizations to find an acceptable compromise.

Even though the amount of the charge wasn't lowered, Mr. Murphy said the negotiated concessions make the deal more palatable.

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JIM MURPHY

"We increase development charges according to changes in the Statistics Canada Construction Index. The last time it increased — which was in April — it went up 10.8 per cent.

"We've agreed to cap it at five per cent, notwithstanding what it actually comes in at," he explained. "So there is some risk on the part of the region not being able to recover the full amount."

The agreement also requires a memorandum of understanding be signed by the three developers' organizations saying they will not appeal the amount of the charge.

Though the development charge received regional council's approval, it was done under some protest.

Transportation issues should not be in the hands of regional governments, said Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale.

"I am certainly disappointed that we have to deal with this. This should be a matter for the provincial and federal governments."

ment to reflect what should be charged.

"We would have liked the charge to have been adjusted further downwards. But at the end of the day, you have to weigh the pros and cons," he said.

According to David Birkett, Halton's director of budgets and fiscal policy services, the agreement carries concessions from both side of the dispute. Increases to the approved charge levels come with an annual cap.

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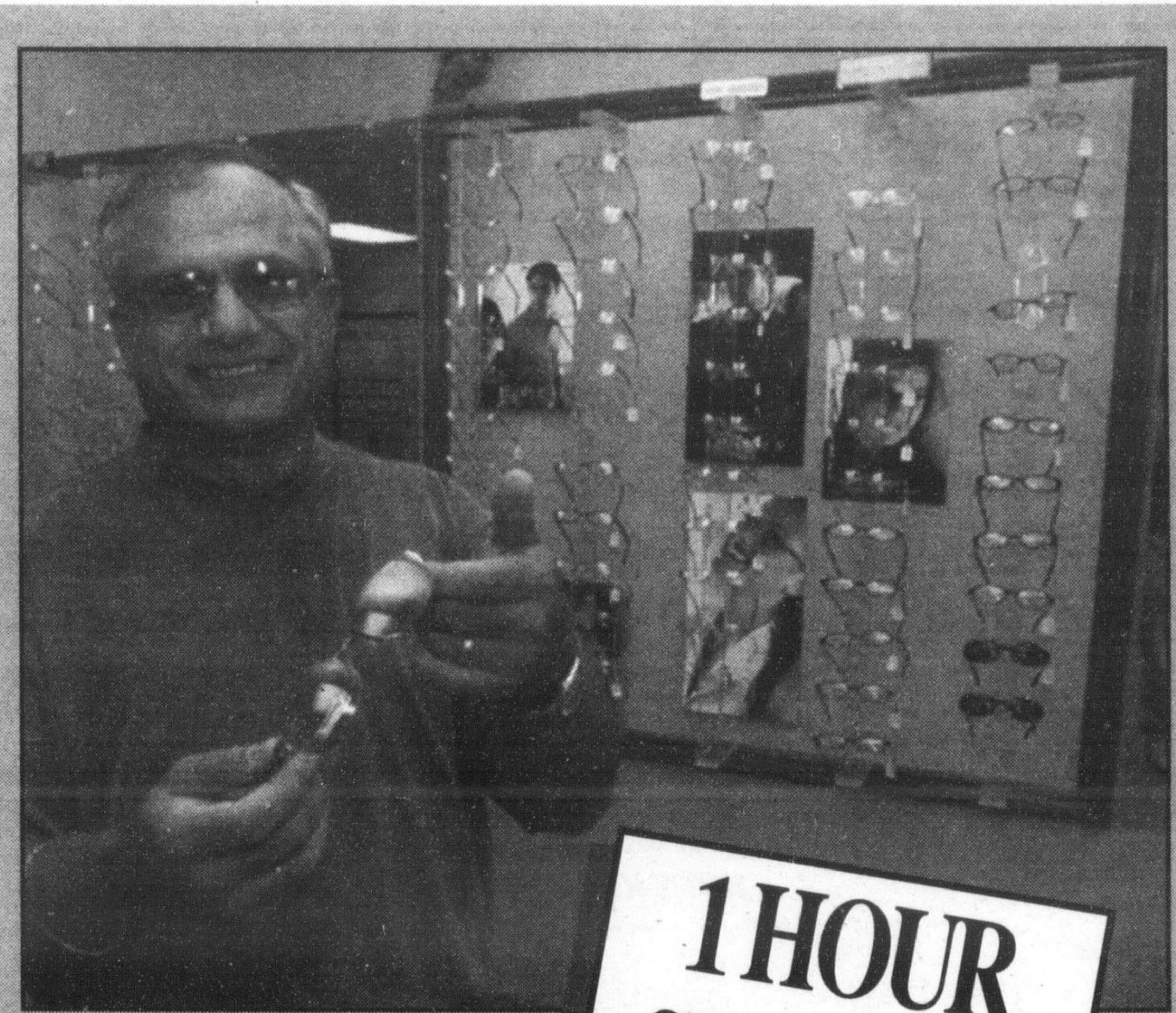
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