

Survey shows lack of affordable housing in Halton

Recent results confirm that problem is only getting worse

By ANGELA BLACKBURN

Special to The Champion

In Halton, the rich are getting richer, but the poor aren't making much headway and there's a definite shortage of affordable housing.

That was among the findings of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) 2004 Report on Quality of Life in Urban Canada. Halton Region was one of 20 municipalities that participated in the survey.

The details were released earlier this month via telephone conference by Edmonton Councillor Michael Phair, who chaired the

committee that authored the report.

This year's report, the third in a series, looks at six quality of life indicators in 20 Canadian municipalities that account for 40 per cent of Canada's population.

According to the FCM, which will use the report's findings to lobby for government policy and funding changes, the quality of life in Canada's urban centres is at risk.

In Halton, population diversity is one of the most noticeable changes, said Mr. Phair. The population has increased by nearly 20 per cent while Canada's rate increased by nearly 10 per cent. Immigration comprised nearly 23 per cent of the population

increase compared to the Canadian average of just over 18 per cent. "We also continue to see a fairly significant income gap. There are people who do very well, and there are very many in Halton, but for those at the lower end of the scale, there's not been much change," said Mr. Phair.

There's also a definite need for affordable housing in Halton, said Mr. Phair.

"One of the reasons Halton continues to be a great place to live and work is because of the partnerships between our governments, corporate sector, community agencies and residents," said Halton Regional Chair Joyce Savoline.

"However, Halton faces similar challenges with the rest of Canadian municipalities in terms of poverty and affordable housing. If we are to sustain our quality of life, we need to engage the provincial and federal governments to step forward and work with us to address these issues," said Ms Savoline.

The Region will now set about doing, and then presenting to the public, a more in-depth analysis of Halton's data.

The report is based on six quality of life factors: local economy, natural environment; personal goals and aspirations; fairness and equity; basic needs; and social inclusion.

Subsequent reports will be published later this year with in-depth analysis of many of the topics.

Despite the areas of concern, the report finds most citizens in Halton enjoy a high standard of living, thanks to declining unemployment rates and increasing income levels, with the exception of those at the lower end of the income scale.

In addition, Halton's economy has been consistently strong, as evidenced by an increase in new business and a decline in bankruptcies.

The report finds that, across Canada, and in Halton, despite general improvements in rates of post-secondary education, employment growth and home ownership, quality of life deteriorated for a growing number of people during the 1990s.

In addition, improvements in income and poverty rates since 1996 have been offset by a growing income gap, housing affordability problems and changes to social programs.


Surveyed cities across Canada included Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Québec Metropolitan Community, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Surveyed Ontario municipalities included: Halton region, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Ottawa, Peel region, Sudbury, Toronto, Waterloo region, Windsor, and York region.

The FCM began conducting this study with 16 municipalities in 1999. That has grown to 20 comprising some of Canada's largest cities and suburbs in seven provinces.

The first report looked at the social effects of the economic recession of the early 1990s.

• see REPORT on page 10



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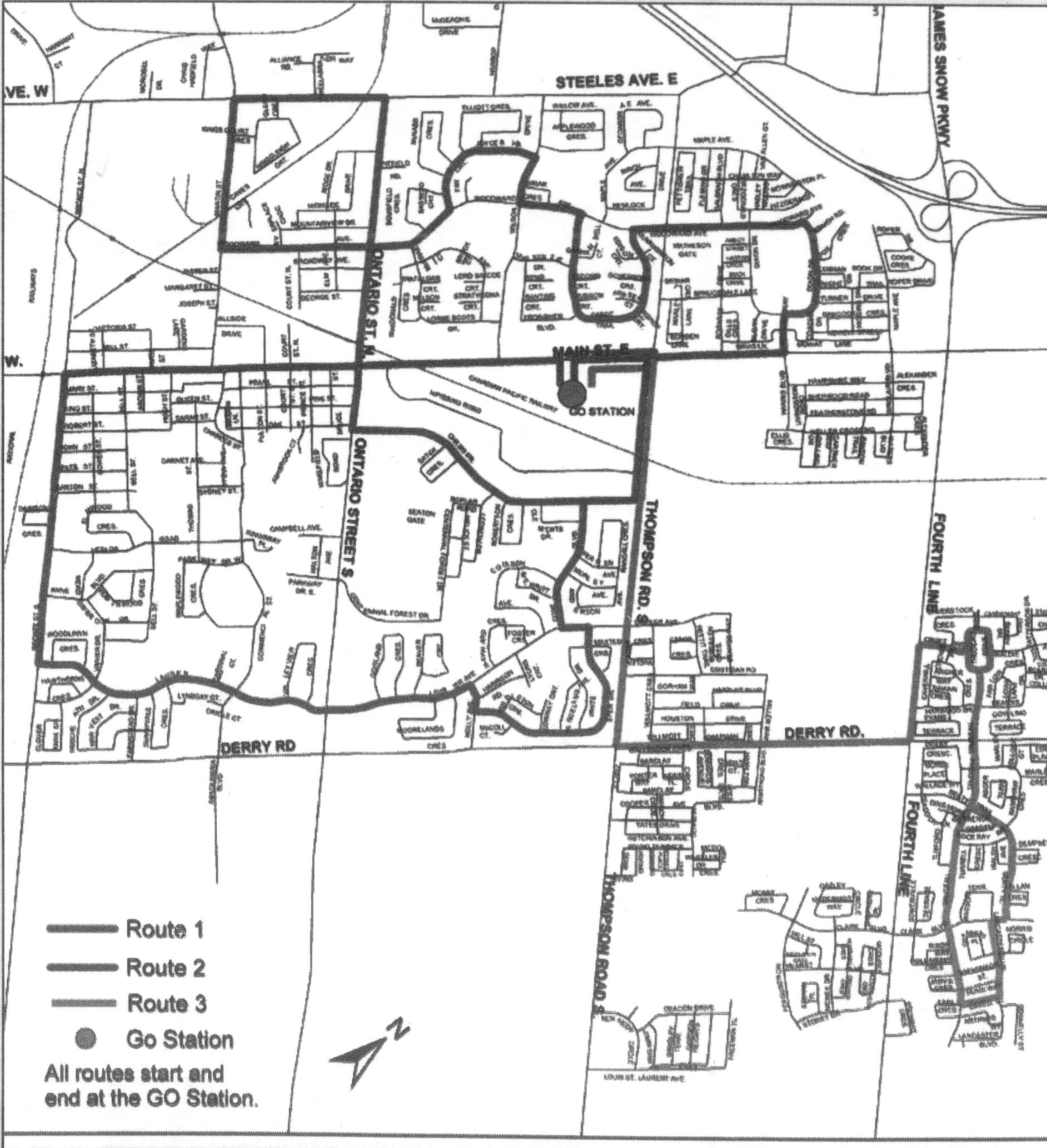
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**New Transit Service
Community Open House & Information Centre**

The Community Services Department invites you to participate in a Community Open House regarding proposed changes to the existing transit system. The current dial-a-bus service will be replaced by an expanded transit service, which will include service for new subdivisions in Milton and improvements to the existing GO feeder routes. At this Open House, you will be able to share your opinions on three new proposed transit routes, GO feeder routes and daily transit schedules.

Date:	Tuesday, June 1, 2004
Time:	4:00 – 8:00 p.m. (drop-in) 6:30 p.m. (presentation and discussion)
Location:	Hugh Foster Hall 53 Brown Street (Next to Town Hall)

Proposed Transit Routes



If you are unable to attend, but wish to provide comments, please contact Heide Schlegl at 905-878-7252, ext. 2506 or send an e-mail to heide.schlegl@milton.ca

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