

No fee exemption permitted for Habitat for Humanity

By **MELANIE HENNESSEY**

The Champion

Habitat for Humanity Halton's request for exemption from certain Regional fees was turned down by the administration and finance committee Wednesday.

The organization that builds affordable homes for low-income working families asked for development charges, urban frontage and sewer and water connection charges to be waived on the houses it constructs.

But a report from Commissioner of Corporate Services Jane MacCaskill recommended the request be denied.

"There is no exemption available under the development charge or user fee bylaws, and no regional

programs exist at this time that provides grants to this type of project," the report said.

The committee endorsed staff's recommendation.

"We were disappointed," said Susan Goetz, chair of the Habitat for Humanity Halton board of directors.

She said she was told at the meeting that the Region is developing a comprehensive housing strategy and Habitat's request will be revisited when the policy is established.

"We're hoping that the Region will be able to draw up that strategy soon," Ms Goetz said.

The strategy's expected to be completed this year. Ms MacCaskill's report said the document "will address questions about what types of housing proposals

are appropriate for government assistance, what are the roles and responsibilities of each level of government and the actual resources that are to be applied to assist such housing proposals."

The report also noted that there's currently a federal/provincial housing program in place, but Halton hasn't made a decision to participate yet because the program is in the process of being re-designed.

In 2002, the local Habitat branch received an \$8,400 grant from the Region for a home it was constructing in Burlington.

The matter will go before regional council at its meeting tomorrow.

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Murder suspects make third video appearance in court

Two men charged with first-degree murder in connection with the slaying of a Milton resident will return to Burlington court March 23 to be spoken to.

This was decided at their video appearance Thursday at Ontario Court of Justice in Burlington.

Brian Stockton, 48, was found dead in a flaming car June 17 behind Traffix transport company on Regional

Road 25, north of Hwy. 401.

Halton Hills resident Michael James McDonough, 39, and Mississauga's John Kevin McClatchey, 47, were charged with first-degree murder in June of last year.

They were arrested the day after the murder at their homes.

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