

There's 9-year wait for social housing

By **BERNADETTE WARD**
Special to The Champion

From suggestions of shared housing to observations about public attitudes, about 30 Halton residents came to provide input on the Region's future Housing Strategy at a public information meeting June 14.

"We need to change people's perception about housing and apartments if we are to meet the needs of the community," said Milton Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau.

Ms Schau made reference to the fact that more than 9,000 single-family units have been created in Milton and that there's now some resistance to other types of housing.

According to the presentation provided by the Region's Housing Director Rob Cressman, it's housing that's desperately needed.

Mr. Cressman pointed out that some 1,200 people are homeless in Halton each year, but he added that emergency housing isn't the only area where housing is unavailable.

The Region currently has a vacancy rate at a low of two per cent (a healthy one should be at approximately four per cent, according to Mr. Cressman) and a nine-year wait list for social housing for a single person. That makes for a difficult situation for a range of residents including young people just starting out on their own, single people looking for modest housing, seniors looking to downsize, people in transition situations and those in need of accessible or supportive housing.

"I feel we can't marginalize this group," said Jillian Manchester, who raised the idea of integrating affordable housing into existing communities.

Recognizing that affordable housing is tied to a number of factors that create a healthy and inclusive community as well as economic prosperity, the Region has tackled the problem using the concept of the housing continuum or a range of housing needs for residents as they move through different life stages and incomes.

"You have to have a range of options so that people can remain in their community," Mr. Cressman noted.

"It's not so much about bricks and mortar as building the kind of community we want," he said.

Those in the audience, both stakeholders and residents, were able to relate to the series of anecdotes used by Mr. Cressman to create a portrait of those affected by the housing shortage.

From those living on disability incomes to single parents, divorcees and seniors who need to be close to family, each story demonstrated the difficulty of finding affordable housing in Halton.

Miltonian Bob Beyette saw the situation from the perspective of changing the rules that govern property use. His daughter currently resides with him and he expressed concern about the amount of money it would cost him to build to accommodate his family. "We have to look after our own, too," he said.

Even Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline noted with some wry humour that her own daughter couldn't afford to reside in Halton after finishing school.

Barb Kennedy from the organization Changing Gears Inc., Compassionate Transitions for Seniors, who spoke about the need for seniors housing, questioned if the Region has considered the concept of shared housing.

"It's not something we're used to doing but I think we'll see more of it," she said.

Milton Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray agreed that there is a need for housing for seniors. She spoke with passion on behalf of an elderly couple who've lived on a property for over 40 years and now have few other options but to live in a trailer on their children's property.

She wondered if the Region was truly serious about affordable housing considering that it will cost the family some \$7,000 in charges in order to make the living arrangements a reality.

"I think it's unconscionable," she said.

Other participants questioned government involvement, both in terms of co-ordination of the different levels and even whether or not the municipality should be involved.

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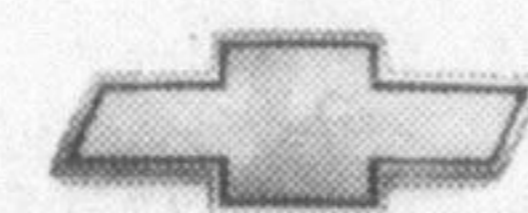


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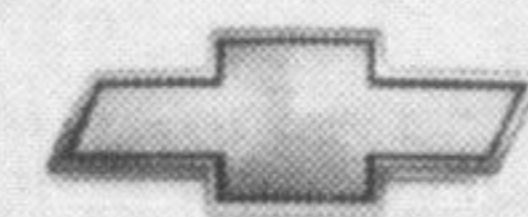
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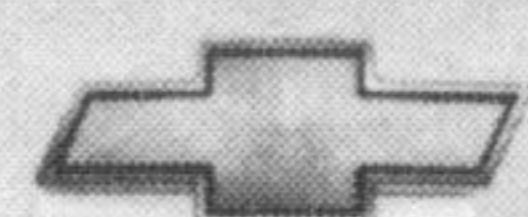
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\$3,000	\$161	\$4,814

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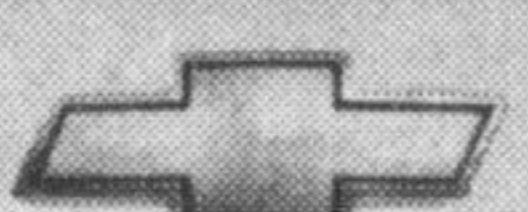
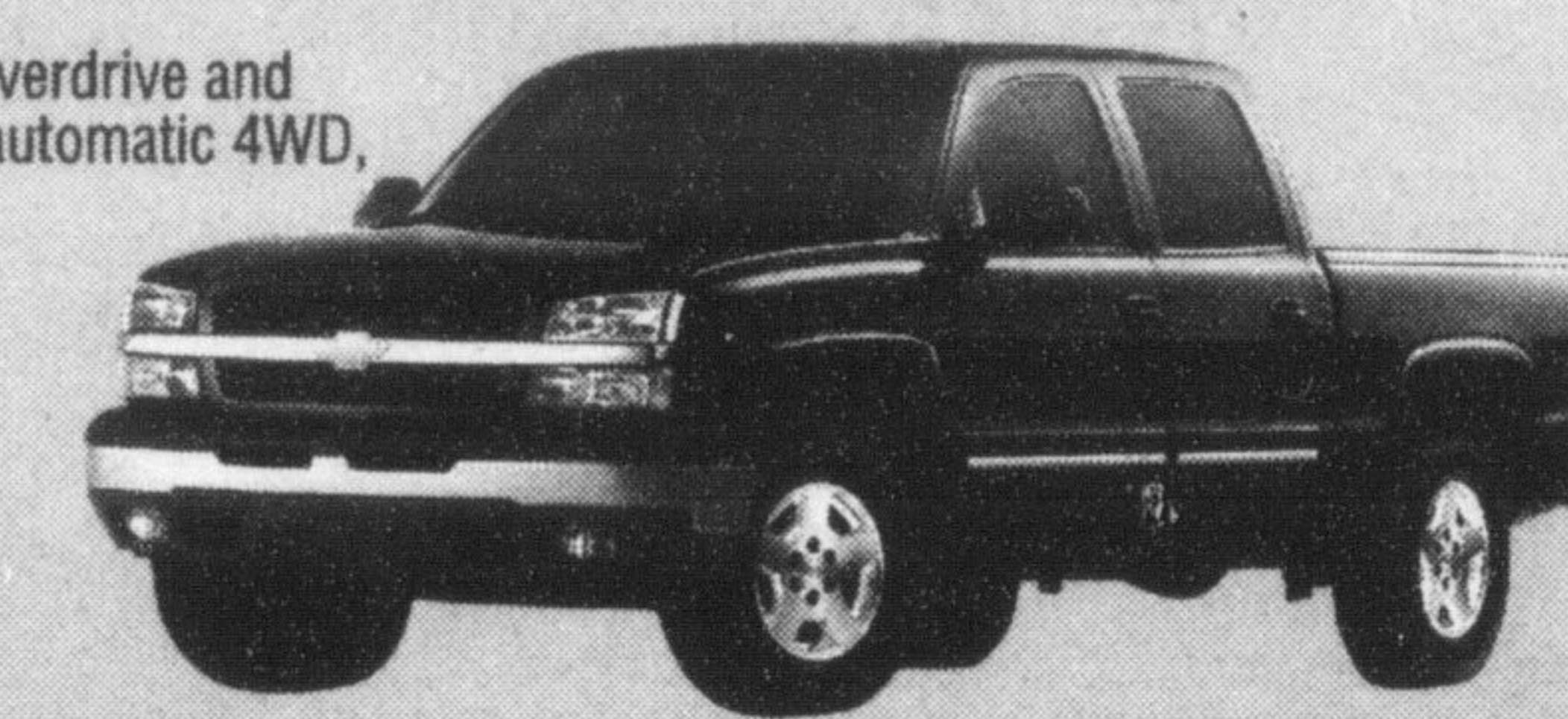
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\$1,100 Freight, \$0 Security Deposit.

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\$1,500	\$375	\$3,421
\$3,000	\$324	\$5,087

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PURCHASE CASH PRICE
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DOWN	MONTHLY	TOTAL DUE @ SIGN
\$0	\$291	\$1,623
\$1,500	\$260	\$3,312
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