

School boards raise development charges

By Tim Whitnell
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Soaring land values have prompted both of Halton's school boards to raise their educational development charges (EDC) paid by developers.

Both boards passed amendments to their EDC bylaws at recent public meetings.

EDCs are what land developers pay to boards who in turn use the money to purchase land for future school construction. They're on top of the local and regional municipal land charges developers are required to pay.

The Halton public board is now charging developers \$1,260 per residential dwelling — a 34 per cent increase over the \$941 in the 2005 bylaw.

The non-residential EDC, which covers new commercial-industrial-institutional facilities, is now 35 cents per square foot, a 42 per cent boost over the previous rate of 26 cents.

The public board based its latest EDC update on the cost estimates of purchasing land for building projects found in its 2003 Capital Strategic Plan. Just two years ago the board estimated it needed \$58 million over 15 years to buy land for 17 elementary and five secondary school sites. That figure has jumped to \$92.5 million.

The Halton Catholic board also amended its EDC bylaw recently. Its new figures are an EDC of \$808 per new residential unit — well up from the \$592 of two years ago — while the new rate for non-residential development is 23 cents per square foot, up from 17 just two years ago.

The public board has been doing an annual review of its EDC bylaw since 2004 and has bumped up the rates for both residential and non-residential units in consecutive years.

The public board's facilities superintendent said prime land scarcity in this area, due in part to greenbelt legislation coupled with high demand for housing here and a good economy, is driving rising land costs.

Gerry Cullen said developers have known about the board's EDC intentions for about a month.

He said they have an appeal period of about 40 days if they disagree with the figures, although he doesn't think that will happen.

He guessed that most or all of the EDC increase will be passed on to homebuyers by developers.

"I suppose in a lot of cases that's what they do. That would be part of their (price) negotiating process," said Cullen.

Turner offers brochure on childcare benefit

Halton MP Garth Turner has created a question-and-answer brochure containing facts about the federal government's new childcare benefit.

The local politician said he has received many requests for information on the topic from local residents.

"I want all eligible families in Halton to receive this payment," he said.

The benefit, which came into

effect Saturday, will provide \$100 a month per child up to the age of six.

Families already receiving the child tax benefit or who have applied for it in the past will automatically begin receiving the payments this month.

However, families not receiving the existing benefit who may not have applied for it previously because they felt their incomes were too high will have

to enroll directly.

Applications are available on the Canada Revenue Agency Web site at www.cra-arc.gc.ca or at local Service Canada centres. They can take two to three months to process and payments can be backdated to a maximum of 11 months or to the start of the program.

Turner's brochure is available by calling (905) 693-0166 or at www.garth.ca.

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