

Rising costs due to DCs big concern for builders: survey

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expected to reach that far south. The Region also pushed back the widening of Trafalgar Road in Halton Hills between Steeles Avenue and Hwy. 7 to the 2013-20 timeframe, a few years later than planned.

Carr said the Region had no choice but to postpone the Trafalgar project.

"They (developers) would have gone to the Ontario Municipal Board because it (the project) had nothing to do with Milton development," he said.

Despite the apparent concessions, the development community lobbied hard for council to drop or modify the charge, busing in hundreds of construction industry workers to regional council chambers.

The tactic seemed to work. After acrimo-

nious debate, a bitterly-divided regional council found a compromise. It unanimously endorsed the charge but only if the residential development industry was given an opportunity to submit its own financing arrangement.

The industry took advantage of the offer and returned to staff and council last fall with a suggestion that the \$7,888 be included under the Province's Development Charges Act, rather than as a separate charge.

The benefit to current developers of that arrangement is they might be able to recoup the money from future developers as long as homebuilding keeps humming along in Halton.

With no apparent financial hit or risk to

the Region, council agreed.

Combined with a stronger economy, the result has been a resurgence in demand to build homes in Halton.

However, it hasn't completely alleviated concern about rising development charges and their impact on housing affordability, according to the Canadian Home Builders Association (CHBA).

The CHBA recently released the results of a nation-wide survey showing rising costs due to development charges jumped to the top of the list of concerns for new home builders in Canada. While about a third of respondents nationwide reported it as a critical problem, almost two-thirds did so in Ontario, the CHBA stated.

The association noted some of the high-

est charges were in Halton, led by Oakville. For each home built in Oakville north of Dundas, for example, a developer has to pay approximately \$61,500 — \$30,000 to Halton Region for water and wastewater servicing and regional road construction along with the \$7,888 up-front charge; \$2,576 to the two local school boards; and \$21,000 to the Town of Oakville for its services such as parks, recreation centres, libraries and local roads.

The Town's development charges, about twice what Milton charges for its services, are the subject of an upcoming hearing at the OMB.

However, Oakville Mayor Rob Burton, Carr's major ally in the push for the extra \$7,888, said the huge demand to build in his town is proof municipal charges on new houses in Halton are nowhere near high enough to drive down demand.

Burton said more are actually needed to help pay for things currently not allowed to be collected under the Province's Development Charges Act, including a portion of new hospital construction.

Development charges aren't a tax in the sense municipalities can't collect the money as general revenue. The money can only be collected based on a lengthy list of growth-related projects municipalities estimate will be needed to accommodate future population. Consultants compile the projects in background studies, available publicly through municipal websites, to calculate development charges.

Not averse to political lobbying himself, Burton said he intends to send Oakville's 2009 development charges background study to every member of the provincial legislature and ask them to point out projects in the list they might feel Oakville doesn't need.

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Halton Region one of best employers for new Canadians

The opportunities Halton Region provides to immigrants have earned the municipality a rating as one of the best employers for new Canadians by Medicorp Canada Inc., a publishing firm that manages the Canada's Top 100 Employers project.

It's the second year in a row the Region, which employs more than 1,500 people, has received the recognition.

The award recognizes employers offering programs to assist new Canadians in making the transition to a new workplace and life in the country.

"Halton Region provides career-track, paid internships to internationally-educated

jobseekers through the Career Bridge internship program, hosting interns in asset management, community relations, and planning/transportation services areas," states Medicorp's website www.eluta.ca/new-canadians-at-regional-municipality-of-halton.

"The Region also provides four-month mentorships to new Canadians through Job Connect, an employment program managed by the Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Immigrants are matched with mentors who have a similar career and professional background and help their mentees access professional networks, revise their resumes and

hone their interview skills."

Halton Region also participates in placement programs with the Halton Multicultural Council and the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton.

Between 2001 and 2006, Halton's immigrant population increased by almost 30 per cent compared to an overall rate of 12 per cent in Ontario.

The Region expects this trend to continue, as Halton becomes the home for more people. The population of the community is expected to grow 62.5 per cent to 780,000 by 2031.

"To meet future labour market needs and maintain a competitive workforce, we do as much as we can to ensure the success of those who come to us through international immigration" said Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr in a media release.

"Newcomers contribute to our economic, social and cultural development and it is in everyone's interest to help them settle into a healthy and prosperous life in Halton."

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