

MVA committee's funding request causes concern

By ROB KELLY
The Champion

Political skirmishing surfaced between Burlington Mayor Walter Mulkeiwich and Oakville councillor Kevin Flynn Wednesday when the controversial topic of market assessment (MVA) came up.

Although the two men are ideologically on the same wavelength with many issues (both have ties to the NDP), there is a rift over MVA, which has deeply and evenly split Halton regional council.

Wednesday, at the regional planning and public works committee meeting, Mr. Mulkeiwich attempted, unsuccessfully, to stall further funding for a committee studying the whole thorny question of MVA, and possible alternatives to it.

Mr. Mulkeiwich wanted regional

council to review allocating the \$50,000.

Mr. Flynn quickly leaped to the defence of the MVA committee, of which he is a member.

Under MVA, roughly \$4 million in property taxes would shift from Burlington to Oakville residents, since when the study was done in 1988, property values in Oakville were deemed generally higher. Milton councillors support Burlington in pushing for MVA, while Halton Hills representatives back Oakville's opposition to it.

Mr. Mulkeiwich said that given the thrust of committee activities, \$200,000, not \$50,000, could be exhausted by further studying property taxation. Regional finance director Joe Rinaldo said that was entirely possible, if one truly billed for the time regional staff put into such

work. But much of it is done by management employees, who don't get overtime, he noted.

Mr. Mulkeiwich did not appear much swayed by that argument. "The full costs of this exercise should be on the table for all the taxpayers of Halton to know," he said. He called the \$50,000 request "misleading."

"To suggest there's something

here that is not above board is extremely erroneous," Mr. Flynn replied. Of the MVA committee, he added, "if they need anything, they need encouragement, as opposed to being portrayed as having ulterior motives. I see this as extremely top-notch value for the taxpayers' expenditure."

Mr. Flynn depicted the committee as frugal, saying he "sensed hesitancy"

among members about asking for the \$50,000. "To try to portray this group in any other way is extremely unfair."

Part of the extra money will go toward preparing and analysing information in a joint project with the provincial Fair Tax Commission, which will use Halton data in a study of province-wide business and property tax systems.

Real estate sales dollars drop 40% in first quarter

The first quarter of the year held little magic for the local real estate sector.

Figures show a 40 per cent drop in the dollar volume of sales over one year ago, according to the Oakville, Milton and District Real Estate Board (OMDREB).

The dollar volume of sales for the first three months of 1993 totalled \$91.3 million, down from \$150.8 million one year ago and \$175.9 million in the first quarter of 1991.

OMDREB President Richard Weima says this year's first quarter results are "dramatically disappointing" and he notes the market appears to have found a new "lower level of operating volume."

"It's hard to pinpoint an individual reason for this year's sales record in the resale market," Mr. Weima says. "I suspect it's the result of a combination of factors: unseasonably bad weather, price reductions by builders anxious to move their properties and a quiet part of the consumer conscience that says 'let's not buy just yet'."

Mr. Weima also said "We may not see a major increase in activity until

people start believing the market has started to climb again... and no one can predict when that will be."

In the meantime, Mr. Weima points out that sales have actually been climbing steadily all year. The dollar volume of sales rose from \$20 million in January to \$31.3 million in February and \$40.1 million in March.

"I've been in the real estate business for 20 years and I've never seen a better time to buy," he adds. "Interest rates are very low, house prices are very reasonable and there is plenty of choice available for prospective purchasers of homes in the Oakville, Milton and Acton areas."

In the past, the real estate market in Canada has always been characterized by periods of intense activity and slower sales, and "we obviously have moved into a period of slower sales," Mr. Weima says.

"Even so, we live in a very desirable corner of the country, and our communities are safe, attractive and reasonable affluent," he adds. "Conditions are bound to improve eventually."

Stenciling workshop at library April 27

Learn one of the most popular decorating methods during a spring craft session at Milton Public Library Tuesday, Apr. 27.

Instructor Mag Brown will teach the basics of an old form of decoration — stenciling — as it's being applied today. The class starts at 7 p.m.

Those who register can choose a variety of stencils reflecting a country, Victorian or whimsical mood and reproduce them using oil based crayons brushed onto a sturdy canvas bag. Both the stencils and crayons will be supplied. The class fee is \$18 for a medium canvas bag, or \$25 for a large bag. Register now, class is limited to 16. Call 875-2665.



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