

Cut by about \$200

Developers nudge back school board charge

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to *The Champion*

Developers and future home buyers in Halton gained a small measure of relief from a potentially volatile situation just before a new education levy was passed.

Educational development charges (EDCs), feared by land developers as a roadblock to new home building, have been scaled back in an agreement between developers and Halton Board of Education administrative staff.

Wayne McNally, the board's superintendent of business services, informed trustees at a recent regular board meeting that the two sides had

reached a verbal understanding as to how a new bylaw on EDCs should be written.

Mr. McNally said board staff and the EDC coalition, representing some 23 Halton developers, agreed certain circumstances warranted a reduction in the previously proposed EDC of \$955 for new residential homes built in Halton. The amended figure is \$764.

Mr. McNally said the rationale used to reduce the amount included the public board's elimination of junior kindergarten and the province's eventual phasing out of grade 13 (now OAC).

EDCs are a lot levy imposed on new homes and used by school boards for capital needs, such as the building of new schools to accommodate

students from new subdivisions.

The superintendent noted that schools boards in the regions of Peel, Durham, York and Wentworth have adopted EDCs in the last five years, though a Supreme Court challenge is currently being made by anti-EDC interests in York.

Several exemptions to EDCs are being recommended by Halton board staff: Community colleges and hydro-electric commissions among them; demolished sites would receive a 10-year exemption to account for environmental cleanup and monitoring; parking structures, so long as they are not used as the principal use of a site, and private schools that are non-profit and own the land.

RC board formally approves new levy

By **KIM ARNOTT**
Special to *The Champion*

The cost of buying a new home in Halton just went up by about \$1,200.

Local separate school board trustees joined their public school board counterparts in unanimously approving an education development bylaw last week.

The bylaw will see new home owners ante up \$1,269 toward the cost of building new schools in developing areas of the region. The public school board will get \$764 of that money, with the remaining \$505 going to the Catholic school board.

New industrial and commercial-use buildings will be charged a fee of .31 per cent of the building's value.

The bylaw, which came into effect Monday, exempts churches, hospitals, colleges, municipal buildings and not-for-profit private schools.

Blair Taylor, an Oakville lawyer representing nine local independent schools, had asked the school boards to exempt all private elementary and secondary schools from the development charges.

"My clients feel that rather than placing a burden on public and separate boards, their role is exactly the opposite," Mr. Taylor told trustees.

If all private school students returned to Halton schools, the cost to the local boards could be as high as \$11.4 million annually, noted Mr. Taylor. Boards could also incur up to \$21.8 million in capital costs to house those students, he said. There would be no corresponding increase in revenue, since parents of private school students already pay school taxes, in addition to tuition for their children.

The Hamilton Halton Homebuilders Association, along with other area homebuilders associations represented by the Development Charges Coalition, has agreed not to challenge the bylaw, following negotiations with the school boards.

Instead, under the negotiated arrangement, all parties will await an anticipated ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada dealing with the constitutionality of education development charges.

If the Supreme Court strikes down the charges, the boards have agreed to return all money collected under the bylaw from members of the coalition.

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