

Developer slams school tax on new homes

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to The Champion

Education development charges are not equitable and will only hurt house buyers, says the president of the local home builders' association.

"We believe this charge discriminates against new home buyers and adds another tax to already overburdened consumers," said Gabriel DeSantis, president of the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association.

"It's up to school boards to cut the fat out of the system, somehow, so new home buyers are not held for ransom."

Mr. DeSantis was reacting to the recent unanimous decision by Halton Board of Education trustees to approve an education development charges bylaw.

The public board bylaw, which went into effect last week, will levy a \$764 charge against new homes built in Halton. The region's Catholic school board has ear-

marked a residential levy of \$505, which was also passed last week.

It will bring the total levy on a new home to \$1,269. The public and separate boards had originally suggested fees of \$955 and \$609 respectively.

A bylaw for both boards will also establish amounts to be levied against new industrial/commercial use buildings.

Such levies are designed to cover the board's share of building new schools.

Mr. DeSantis, who appeared before the Halton board in early March to denounce the pending implementation of the bylaw here, said the new charge is unfair.

"The consumer can no longer bear any increased costs in building. The builder will not absorb these costs," he warned. "They will be passed on to new home buyers" in their entirety.

Mr. DeSantis also questioned what he sees as inequities in the new bylaw. He doesn't believe it's fair the residential charge is a flat rate applied to any new

home, regardless of whether its value is \$100,000 or \$500,000.

The superintendent of business with the Halton public school system said his board has no control over the manner in which the levy is applied.

"That's the way the law reads in the Development Charges Act," said Wayne McNally. "Trustees can't contravene the act."

The business superintendent was non-committal about whether or not the fee should be a flat rate, regardless of new home size.

"Laws aren't perfect. I don't know whether it should be differentiated," he said.

Mr. DeSantis also questioned the fairness of hitting childless or retired new home buyers with the levy while a couple with children in the system could purchase the same home as a resale and not be subjected to it.

Police to move into new headquarters

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"It is interesting to note that input for the design of the building was solicited from members of the police service so as best to identify needs," Deputy Chief Algar said.

Construction is expected to be completed by the end of December.

Funding for the \$2.9 million project is shared by Halton Region and the federal and provincial governments through the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Works Program.

The project is financed by \$2 million from the infrastructure works program, almost \$1.1 million from development charges, \$279,000 from reserves and \$387,000 borrowed.

Police Chief Peter Campbell has said no current plans exist for the service to close its Georgetown station, however he hasn't ruled it out as a possibility when faced with anticipated budget constraints.

The regionally-owned King Street building will be put up for sale, said Don Williams, manager of realty services for Halton Region.

The Town of Milton would be given the first opportunity to buy the facility before it was put on the open market, he said.

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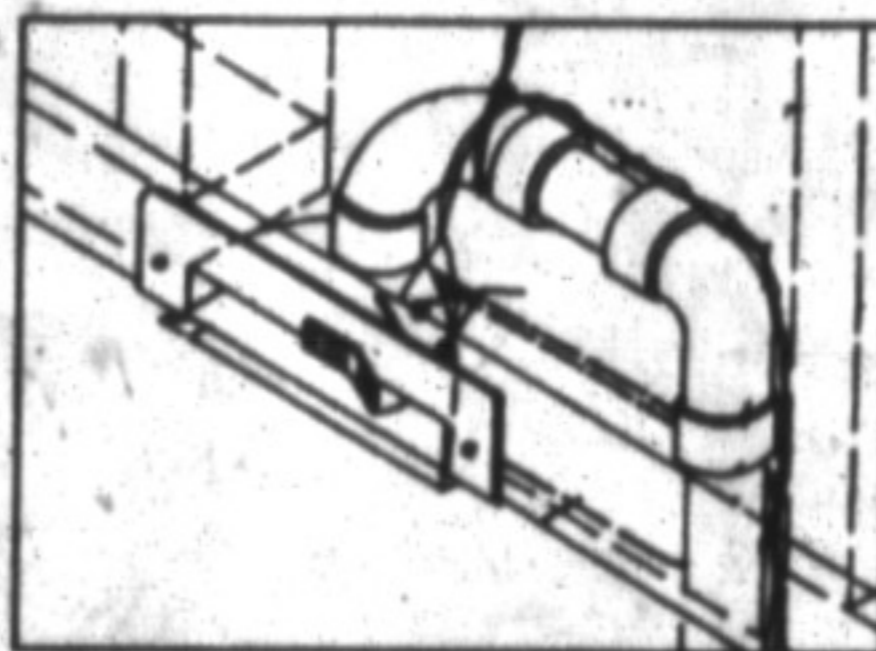
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