

Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville house sales boom in 2001

BY CAROL COOPER
Special

Toronto's recording-breaking housing sales of last year affected York Region, running salespeople off their feet in Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Sales of single-family residential units and average and median prices skyrocketed in this area in 2001, according to figures from the Toronto Real Estate Board. The number of dwellings sold increased from 1,968 in 2000 to 2,537 last year.

This includes detached, semi-detached, townhouses

and condominiums, but excludes new houses and exclusive listings.

"We did great," said Markham-based Century 21-South Breeze Realty broker/owner Cyril Chen of a year that set records for his business. With 50 per cent of his sales in Markham and the rest spread around the Greater Toronto Area, Chen saw many first-time buyers purchasing lower-priced detached houses in the \$200,000 to \$250,000 range.

Low interest rates, high rents and lack of rental accommodation spurred

them to buy, he said.

The record-breaking year can also be attributed to a booming construction market and the influx of 300 newcomers a day to the GTA, said David Pearce, president of the Toronto Real Estate Board.

Chen agrees. Newcomers from Sri Lanka and mainland China contributed to his sales, he said.

Markham is still one of the more desirable areas to locate, according to Diane Bromley, a 19-year real estate veteran currently with Unionville's Min Com New Choice Realty. People continue to come here,

despite the drop in the job market, she said.

High numbers of first-time buyers meant demand outstripped supply for Maria Gallo of Gallo Real Estate in Stouffville. She estimated overall sales rose 10 per cent in 2001. "If the inventory had been there, it would have been higher," Gallo said.

No single type of housing predominated, she said, even though Stouffville consists mostly of detached dwellings. "When the market is this good, everything goes."

Meanwhile, Casey Chan of

Markham's Homelife-Principal Realty found that sales of "executive" houses in the \$300,000 to \$500,000 price range "went up quite a bit," estimating a jump of between two and four per cent.

Chan expects continuing brisk sales for a couple of months into 2002. After that, what happens depends on government policy and how it handles interest rates, he said.

"Real-estate is an interest-

rate-sensitive commodity," he said. "Whenever the rate starts to go up, people start to hesitate."

When first-time buyers make a purchase, the former owners move up in the market, according to Chen. That creates a domino effect.

Min Com's Bromley agrees, noting, "If you eliminate the first-time buyer in your real-estate chain, that's when your market starts to fail".

Gravel pit owner hit with fine

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

A Sharon man and his sand and gravel operation in East Gwillimbury have been fined \$55,000 for extracting too much aggregate and falsifying pit records.

Floyd Preston Limited and its director Larry Preston pleaded guilty to exceeding tonnage limits at the Conc. 7 pit from 1997 through 2000 and to filing false production reports in 1997 through 1999, the provincial ministry of natural resources said this week.

An audit last year by an industry group, the Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation, discovered Floyd Preston Limited exceeded its licensed 100,000-tonne annual extraction limit by a total of 335,216 tonnes from 1997 to 1999, the ministry said.

The company's 2000 production report showed its extraction was 161,267 tonnes above the limit.

"Tonnage conditions are placed on aggregate licenses to help reduce the impact of a pit or quarry operation in an area, including effects such as truck traffic on neighbouring residents and additional wear on municipal roads," the ministry's Aurora district office added in a release.

For several months, at least one other York Region municipality has expressed its concerns to the province on the aggregate industry's compliance with regulations.

Officials from Whitchurch-Stouffville accompanied provincial inspectors late last month on a "blitz inspection" of a half-dozen pits in the town.

The inspectors from MNR and the

Business group likes transit news

From page 4.

and provincial roads to handle automobile traffic and;

• Transit service for the region's smaller communities, which, despite their rural settings, are growing.

The goal is to eventually have up to one-third of the region's commuters using public transit, Gordon said. That's a huge jump from the less than 20 per cent that now use transit.

It is important for the region to improve public transit to coax York Region residents away from their automobiles, said Ruth Burkholder, president of the Markham Board of Trade.

"If a bus is not going to get you to work any faster than your car, people will choose the car," she said.

environment ministry looked at fill being added to pits but they found nothing out of the ordinary, Whitchurch-Stouffville's development services director Tom Parry admitted this week.

Parry said the town and its neighbour

Uxbridge prompted the blitz because of their suspicions that pit operations are not being properly monitored.

Normally, only one provincial inspector is available to watch the area's 160 pits, he said.

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FEBRUARY 3, 2002, 1:30 p.m.
Jonathan Walford, former curator of the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, and a private collector of historic fashions from the 17th century to the present, will talk about the changes in women's fashion.

FEBRUARY 10, 2002, 1:30 p.m.
Joseph Hisey, Instructor of Art History at Sheridan College and current chair of the Costume Society of Ontario, will be speaking about the jewellery collections of Queen's Victoria, Alexandra and Mary. Joseph will reveal the fascinating collection of jewels that are associated with the British monarchy.

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