

Growing like Aurora, town right on pace

850 building permits expected this year in Whitchurch-Stouffville

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

While it may have looked like growth in Stouffville was growing by leaps and bounds last year, it has settled back down this year, in keeping with the town's population projections.

Since estimates on population growth in Whitchurch-Stouffville affect how soon facilities such as arenas and parks get constructed, the town is currently working with a demographic and futurist expert to determine the most accurate population estimates through to 2026.

Population models are updated every year.

Currently, Whitchurch-Stouffville is growing at about the same rate as Aurora.

Slower-than-anticipated growth would mean certain facilities and services would come in more slowly in keeping with residents' needs. Faster growth would allow for certain facilities to be built sooner.

In 2006, 1,173 building permits were issued by the town for 944 single detached homes and 229 semi-detached, townhouse and other multi-residential buildings.

About 950 to 975 of those building permits were issued in the community of Stouffville itself.

In June 2006, the municipality's population was esti-

mated at 26,000. In June 2007, it was 27,750.

The upsurge in growth last year was due to an 18-month delay in the completion of the York-Durham Sanitary Sewer, Andrew McNeely, the town's manager of planning, said. This resulted in a longer period for developers to market their homes. Slower-than-anticipated growth in places such as Markham and Richmond Hill also sent some potential buyers to Stouffville to look for a new home.

For 2007, about 800 to 850 building permits are likely to be issued. The rate of growth is likely to keep steady with a similar or smaller number of building permits to be issued for next year, Mr. McNeely said.

Estimates made in a 2004 study called for about 600 homes to be built each year over a decade.

Factors that can affect the rate of growth include mortgage rates, the strength of the manufacturing sector and improvements to highways or transit systems.

Long-term projections made in 2004 called for a population of more than 32,000 people in Whitchurch-Stouffville in 2008; more than 42,000 in 2013 and more than 62,000 in 2026.

The town is still confident with the projections made in 2004, Mr. McNeely said, but they'll continue to be refined yearly.

The population numbers are used to assist in budget deliberations and the town's five-year forecast.

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Catholic board on top

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
Staff Writer

The York Catholic District School Board is at the top of the class in Ontario when it comes to standardized testing.

The release of the standardized testing scores from the Education Quality and Accountability Office allows school boards to calculate a board average by adding the final scores from reading, writing and mathematics of grades 3 and 6 students as well as the Grade 9 mathematics scores.

Although EQAO does not support the ranking of schools, the data shows the Catholic board has achieved the highest average of any school board in the province, board spokesperson Chris Cable said.

"We are proud. It means we are doing something right," she added. "We like to think it's because of our good teaching practices."

"St. Edward Catholic Elementary School in Markham made significant improve-

ments from last year's scores.

Last school year the percentage of Grade 3 students meeting the provincial average was 51 per cent in reading, 54 per cent in writing and 69 per cent in math, which increased this year to 78, 89 and 92 per cent, respectively.

The Grade 6 scores increased from 80 per cent in reading, 85 per cent in writing and 58 per cent in math to 86, 86 and 84, respectively.

"After analysing the data from last year, we decided to plan our strategies earlier this year," principal Anna Barone said.

"We took a different approach this year, not just involving the Grade 3 and 6 teachers but the entire staff."

By getting all of the staff involved in the planning process, innovative teaching strategies can be shared.

The school also reached out to parents and the community for literacy support.

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