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Time to pay up on development charges

By Don't feel too bad for Innisfil developers, they'll be fine.

Although the town is looking at increasing development charge rates by up to 161 per cent, local developers and new homeowners have gotten lucky over the last few years. In Alcona and Lefroy, developers are currently charged \$14,623 for fully serviced single and semi-detached units, while residential construction in Cookstown comes with a \$22,394 cost. Even when you take into account the \$3,425 in development charges that are also demanded by the County of Simcoe, Innisfil has still been a relatively cheap place to build a home, when compared to many other Greater Toronto Area communities.

As part of the town's development charge report, consultants reviewed fees from 12 other municipalities ranging from Angus and New Tecumseth to Brampton and Aurora. King Township had the highest charges at \$36,496, while Clarington had the lowest at \$23,612, when including the rates charged by their upper tier municipalities.

Turns out, it's actually been cheaper to build a home in Alcona and Lefroy than in any of the other municipalities surveyed. Meanwhile, Cookstown finishes in the middle of the pack.

Gilford is the only community within the town where development charge rates will decrease, dropping from \$86,238 to \$82,205.

Comment

by Chris Simon

Building in Gilford would still be more costly than in any of the municipalities surveyed, but that end of the town is not the planned hotbed for potential growth.

While Barrie's rate is set at \$17,311, the city will be running out of room to develop over the next few years, leaving Innisfil as the natural alternative for new home buyers.

Even if the new charges were implemented as planned, most new town development would only be charged a few thousand dollars more than in King. Alcona, Lefroy and Cookstown fees would all range between \$38,885 and \$46,729.

Many of the municipalities surveyed are also currently undergoing a review of their fees. It looks like most of them will be following the lead of Innisfil and boosting their rates.

It's necessary, to help pay for the millions of dollars in new infrastructure that will be required over the next few decades, as the population across Southern Ontario continues to climb. These fees help pay for the basic roads, sewer and water services that help keep living

standards high.

Developers have expressed concern with several aspects of the town's proposal. Some say they haven't been given enough time to study the report, while others suggest the fees would have a negative impact on their business.

The town should probably push back the implementation of the fees, which is scheduled for early next year, and attempt to negotiate with developers.

While town staff probably want to have the fees implemented in time for the start of spring construction, many developers have already hinted at legal action. It's an avoidable outcome, and something that could be handled with a few months patience.

Developers, on the other hand, have to stop spreading a doom and gloom scenario. It's unlikely that many homebuyers are going to back out of a purchase, simply because development charges increase by about \$20,000. When a buyer already plans to spend several hundred thousand dollars on a new home, a five or 10 per cent bump probably isn't enough to call off the deal.

Homebuyers will still come to Innisfil, especially when they compare prices in Barrie, and impending fee increases in surrounding municipalities. As a result, developers won't have vacant lots or dramatically increased costs to absorb.

Be kind during a blizzard

Letters From Our Readers

I wanted to write to The Scope to inform the community about a recent experience of mine.

On Nov. 26, I travelled from Toronto to Innisfil

Beach Road on the Barrie GO Transit bus. As I do not drive, and because it was dark by then, I needed to call a taxi to get the rest of the way home to Alcona Beach. I called from the outdoor phone booth after making my way across the icy highway.

Afterwards, I went inside

the nearby gas station as it was snowing so hard I could not see my hand in front of my face and wanted to wait for the taxi out of the blowing snow. Imagine my surprise when I was informed by the gentleman working there that I would not be allowed to wait indoors. I left the station and

subsequently waited 20 minutes for the taxi in the storm.

My family first came to Alcona Beach in 1950 and I have made this community my home ever since. I did not tell the young man in the gas station that I knew the family that owned the business and that I often

shared pleasantries with them over the many years I have lived here. I wanted to share this story with your readers as an 84-year-old grandmother and 57 year resident of Innisfil. It was not a very pleasant experience.

Helen Leaver,
Alcona

MP becoming a Queen's Park bully

Letters From Our Readers

Our own York-Simcoe MP Peter Van Loan is busy exposing himself as the top bully in the nasty school yard that passes for federal politics under Stephen Harper and his band of old Reformers.

He calls our newly elected premier McGuinty "the small man of confederation", because he stands up for us in Ontario. McGuinty is demanding that Ontario receive its fair share of the extra politicians Van Loan wants in Ottawa. Yes folks, the old Reformers want to give you more politicians, but mostly out west in British Columbia

and Alberta. Representation by population seems to be an old concept for the "new but seeming very old" government.

BC's population growth will earn it seven new seats, so it got seven seats. Alberta's growth earned it five seats so it got five seats. The same calculation should give Ontario 21 seats, but it got only 10 seats. It would

appear there's been a miscalculation here, but the truth is that the Conservatives are very calculating. They know that Ontario doesn't support them, but Alberta does. I think the people of York-Simcoe will support McGuinty on this one.

Van Loan should remember who his supporters are, fair dealing

people who expect when they send someone off to Ottawa he or she will represent our interests first, and not their party's.

Peter, your election sign is still in my garage. I will not be needing it any longer, please come and get it. I don't like being cheated or bullied.

Bruce Janes,
Mount Albert

Light Up Night hailed a success

Letters From Our Readers

The Cookstown and District Chamber of Commerce held their annual Light Up Night on Nov. 9.

Although the night was

rainy, many people turned up to share in our welcoming of the Christmas season.

Santa Claus had over 200 visits from children and will be visiting Cookstown again during the Santa Claus parade this Saturday at 1 p.m.

Ralph Wilder, our town crier, officially opened Light up Night and mayor Brian Jackson and MP Peter Van Loan lit our Christmas tree. At 8:30 p.m., the Georgian Bay steam club dazzled us with a parade.

I would like to thank the following volunteers for

assisting with this even: Nancy and Tom Hildebrand, Ralph Wilder, Barb and Warren Baguley, Holly Robinson, Neil Currie, Pat Abernathy and the Georgian Bay Steam Show, Shawna McLachlan, Deidre Vegeris, Readene Harrison, Kaitlin Kapasky, Gord Wauchope,

Rod Boynton, Elsa Johnston, Joelle Dewsbury, Mike Elines, Shelly Hoffer, Jim Arnold and the South Simcoe Police Auxillary.

Without volunteers, none of the Cookstown events would be possible.

Laurie Munroe,
Light Up Night chair