

# No development fee on affordable housing: mayor: Lastman's idea dismissed: [Toronto Edition]

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## ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

"There's every intention of waiving it for the low-cost rental," Mr. [Mel Lastman] added.

Mr. Lastman declared a conflict of interest on the issue at the 11th hour because his eldest son's law firm has acted for one of the affected developers.

While he didn't vote on the bylaw or participate in the debate last week, the mayor has been a vocal supporter of the charges and his staff actively lobbied councillors to support them prior to Mr. Lastman's declaration of conflict.

## FULL TEXT

The city's new development fee policy should not apply to the construction of affordable housing, Toronto's mayor declared yesterday.

"We can waive it," Mel Lastman said of the charge that was passed by a 36-15 vote of city council last week.

"There's every intention of waiving it for the low-cost rental," Mr. Lastman added.

The development charge bylaw was branded as "hypocritical" by a number of councillors who opposed the plan to impose it on all new residential construction in the city.

The policy will hit developers with charges of up to \$3,912 a unit for a single family house.

A one-bedroom apartment will be assessed a \$1,692 levy, while larger apartments get slapped with a \$2,644 fee.

"All it's doing is raising the cost of housing all over the city," Michael Walker, a councillor who vehemently objected to the charges, said yesterday.

"It's making us all look like a bunch of hypocrites, because we say we're concerned about the dwindling supply of affordable accommodation, but yet we go and do something like this."

Mr. Walker said the mayor's plan to have the charge waived for construction of low-cost rental units isn't going to solve the problem.

"How do you make that a law?" he asked. "What the hell does 'affordable housing' mean? As soon as you exempt one category from the policy, other developers are going to appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board for relief."

Mr. Walker also argued that the mayor's proposal will "ghettoize" low-cost accommodation because such

developments will have to be built where land costs are lower than they are in the heart of the city.

"It will just drive affordable housing out to the hinterland," the North Toronto councillor maintained.

"We should just exempt all housing from the policy."

As originally proposed, development charges were supposed to apply to all new construction -- including commercial and industrial projects.

The levies were intended to raise about \$40-million a year for the city.

The money was earmarked for the capital costs of new roads, parks, water and sewer lines and other services made necessary by growth.

But under intense pressure from developers, council's executive committee retreated and recommended the charges be dropped on commercial and industrial construction.

As things now stand, the levies will raise only about \$15- million a year.

Mr. Lastman declared a conflict of interest on the issue at the 11th hour because his eldest son's law firm has acted for one of the affected developers.

While he didn't vote on the bylaw or participate in the debate last week, the mayor has been a vocal supporter of the charges and his staff actively lobbied councillors to support them prior to Mr. Lastman's declaration of conflict.

Howard Moscoe, another councillor who opposes the charges, wasn't prepared to buy the mayor's waiver proposal yesterday.

"I want a definition of affordable housing first," Mr. Moscoe fumed.

And he blasted his council colleagues who agreed to exempt commercial and industrial developers from paying the new fees.

"Council sold out to the development industry," Mr. Moscoe charged.

"It was a \$25-million give-away. These guys took the city to the cleaners."

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