

## THE MISSISSAUGA NEWS

### Region requires growth plans, conference told Builder optimistic about Peel's future

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Feb 12, 2006

By the year 2051, more than 600,000 additional people, almost the population of Mississauga today, will call Peel their home. Although it appears a long time away, a housing expert says the time to start thinking about the implications is now.

"As a society, we should look ahead on a regular basis in order to create a plan of action, to analyse that plan against measurable targets, and then to adjust the plan as the unexpected happens," said Hugh Heron, president of Heron Homes Corporation.

Heron, who is also a past president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, was a keynote speaker at the Liveable Peel Conference held Friday at the Living Arts Centre. The conference provided an opportunity for Regional stakeholders and industry experts to share their insights as they relate to the future of the Region.

Fifty years from now, said Heron, there will be a tremendous renovation and revitalization of Mississauga and Brampton similar to what's happening today at the port lands in Toronto.

"This former industrial land is now considered a model inner-city redevelopment in Canada," he said.

The development is also a tribute to how effective an integrated planning strategy can be when all levels of government, the private sector, and the community work together, he said.

"It's important to realize that when it comes to planning for future growth, the new home building industry is not the enemy. We want to be part of the solution to the challenges that comes with southern Ontario's explosive growth. We can bring to the table our expertise," said Heron.

A builder for more than 40 years, Heron said he was skeptical of the provincial government's Places To Grow Act which requires municipalities by 2015 to set aside a minimum 40 per cent of developable land for housing intensification.

"That's a good idea, but will we have the transportation infrastructure to make it all work?" Heron asked. "If we greatly increase the number of people living in our urban areas, even with enhanced public transportation, this would add to the number of vehicles on the road," he said.

The builder, who did an apprenticeship in a Scottish shipyard before immigrating to Canada, was also concerned that future development will be dominated by high-rises.

"Some people prefer a lifestyle that is less intense than living in an urban area, and they should have the right to choose, both today and in 50 years," he said.

Overall, however, Heron was optimistic about Peel's future.

"Even in 50 years time this will still be a desirable, sought-after residential area. Peel has everything going for it: a fantastic location handy to Toronto and the Niagara Region, plus a cross-section of land types, from lakeshore properties to parkland and conservation areas. Peel has big business, small business, technology, and every amenity residents could want."