

GIVING BACK

Hope springs from St. Thomas

Charity blitz rallies around young family to build a new home in three days

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Special to Postmedia Network

34 Ashberry Place at the new Harvest Run neighbourhood in St. Thomas, Ontario, is most likely one of the best homes Doug Tarry Homes Ltd. has ever built.

The beautifully appointed two-bedroom bungalow features a two-car garage, mud room, spacious kitchen with walk-in pantry and a stunning great room. It's also net zero ready, meaning once the solar panels are installed, the home will produce as much energy as it consumes on an annual basis.

Yet it's not the bells and whistles that make it so special. Just like grandma's baking, there was a secret ingredient thrown into the mix that will be hard to duplicate.

"This home was built with a lot of love," said Doug Tarry, the man behind the three-day blitz build.

Called Project Hope, the home was constructed to support the wife and young family of Johnny Nooren, a popular local building official who passed away in 2016 after a battle with lymphoma. Money from the sale of the home, which listed at \$415,000, will be donated to the family, but the experience was about much more than financial support.

"Hope for the family was the focal point, but it was also about hope for our future and taking care of the planet a little bit better," said Tarry, who orchestrated the project, including Nooren's wife Angela as décor consultant. "This is about taking care of each other and saying we can make a difference if we join together," he said.

With the help of more than 600 volunteers and 200 sponsors, construction took place over the course of three days, from Friday, June 9, to Sunday, June 11. Though nay-sayers said it couldn't be done

and that quality would suffer, the enthusiastic team proved the opposite.

"It was probably better inspected than any home built in Ontario because the building inspectors were there through the entire process," noted Tarry. When the blower door test was performed Saturday night, the result came back at 0.63 air changes per hour, well below the R-2000 energy target of less than 1.5, he added.

In March, Doug Tarry Homes was awarded the inaugural Net Zero Home Award by the Canadian Home Builders' Association. The company believes the Ontario market is ready for hybrid homes and Project Hope showcases the state-of-the-art technologies behind its design, including a dual fuel system that combines an air source heat pump with natural gas.

Other energy-saving features in the Hope house include LED lights, North Star triple-glazed windows and R12 insulation

under the basement slab "so it's going to be nice and toasty with a better soil gas barrier," said Tarry. In addition, three solar-powered mobile energy facilities from Anvil Crawler were used to supply about half of the electricity requirements of the job site.

Raising the bar to a net zero ready rating cost roughly \$18,000 more than normal Energy Star specifications. What you can't put a price tag on, said Tarry, is the overwhelming sense of community and positivity that touched everyone involved in Project Hope.

"I said from the beginning that if you do this you have to understand it is a life-changing experience," said Tarry, still overcome by an overwhelming feeling of joy just days after watching the build come together.

"I wanted to show parallel stories about hope. It wasn't just about helping a family ... it saved my soul. It was magic."

The entire build was caught on camera by Uptop Films



Called Project Hope, 600 volunteers built a new home for the young family of Johnny Nooren who passed away in 2016.

and Tarry expects to release a documentary early next year. To learn more, visit [https://](https://www.facebook.com/Uptop-Films/)

www.facebook.com/Uptop-Films/ or www.dougarry-homes.com.

City of Toronto's tower of red tape costs condo buyers



RICHARD LYALL
RESCON

With 100,000 people coming to the GTA every year, supply has not kept pace and this is creating affordability issues for newcomers and people who want to move within the region.

The supply of new housing and condos is being throttled by a number of factors, including the glacial building approvals process at Toronto City Hall.

A new report launched this month by the University of Toronto's Building Tall Research Group looks at the Official Plan and/or zoning bylaw amendment approval process of 174 new condo projects in Toronto between

2006 and 2016. It's called "Evaluation of Tall Building Construction Permitting Process in Toronto."

It sheds some light on how the supply of condos is being choked off — the building approvals process, which is targeted to take nine months at City Hall, took an average of 3.5 years in 2016.

Basically, the City of Toronto now takes more than double the time it did in 2006 to issue approvals needed to build new condo buildings.

"As Toronto's population grows, the city has no choice but to build skyward with condominiums. However, our research shows that, over time,

it is taking longer to get condo projects approved within the City of Toronto's numerous policy and regulatory controls," says Dr. Arash Shahi, research manager of Building Tall and a post-doctoral fellow at U of T's department of civil engineering. "These delays have slowed down the supply of new units coming to market and resulted in lost revenue for the City."

And what does that mean to the average person? City Hall's tower of red tape is reducing the number of units available for all Torontonians.

That means the supply chain of condos is constrained while demand is as strong as ever: when supply can't meet demand, prices rise.

So, whether you're a first-time buyer, a millennial or a young family looking to break into the condo market, taking the high-rise route into the market is a logical step but could be less expensive if City Hall could make significant improvements in the approvals process.

What's worse for the rest of us who hope that City Hall can finance municipal services and infrastructure, millions of property tax dollars are being left on the table.

The study notes that a hypothetical 50-storey condo with 500 units (with an average unit cost of \$470,000, according to Business Canada 2016 figures) would generate about \$3,200 of property tax per unit — or \$1.6 million per building in just one year. With an approvals delay of almost three years, that would represent about \$5 million in lost property tax revenue for City coffers.

And that's only one project. Imagine what could happen if the thousands of condo units were released more quickly to the market — with more supply, new condos would become more affordable. And the City would have money to fix roads, build bridges, pay for wastewater and water services ... you get the idea.

There is no silver bullet to housing affordability, but the

building approvals process is an important factor that must be addressed.

So what can be done? I'll leave that answer to RESCON's director of building science and innovation, Paul De Berardis, a co-author of the report: "There is no better time than now for reform after the recent launch of Ontario's Fair Housing Plan, which

seeks to increase housing supply and streamline the development approvals process."

— **Richard Lyall, president of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), has represented the residential construction industry in Ontario since 1991. For more information, visit www.rescon.com.**



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