

Paul Gormley's son, Brendan, does his homework on the wide kitchen counter.



Paul Gormley always wanted a good-sized home with a big backyard in a natural setting, and far (though not too far) from the city and its amenities. Now he's living his dream.

Mr. Gormley is a commercial real estate executive who runs an office in Toronto about 60 km from his home in The Meadows in the Glen in the hamlet of Glen Williams near Georgetown. He, his wife Leslie, and their two tween sons and daughter, agree their new 3,900-square-foot, four-bedroom home meets the family's requirements. They moved in last October, leaving a smaller home with less yardage.

"We can spread our wings here," Mr. Gormley says, surveying his half-acre lot with pride. "It's serene. We have a pathway leading to the Bruce Trail [which bisects the development]. We can hike for miles. There's a local bakery, an English pub and the 150-year-old Williams Mill Visual Arts Centre that's been restored as artists' studios."

An 18-hole golf course is around the corner and a 10-minute drive affords access to Georgetown's shopping malls, restaurants,

# LIVE LARGE

The 905, where spacious yards and homes and pretty nature trails are the enviable norm

*By Jack Kohane*

the GO Train and highways 407 and 401.

"There are great activities nearby for the kids — schools, dance studios, hockey and lacrosse arenas," Mr. Gormley says. "This is the best of all worlds."

That world encompasses the bungalow designs of The Meadows in the Glen, ranging in size from about 2,000 sq. ft. to more than

3,500 sq. ft.; and two-storey models from nearly 3,100 sq. ft. to about 5,400 sq. ft. Prices are \$970,000 to \$1.455-million.

"Most of our extended family live nearby, so we entertain at home regularly," Mr. Gormley says. "The openness of our main living areas, the oversized windows looking out to rolling hills and forests, our great room and the large outdoor patio make this home perfect for parties."

Though such pastoral digs are beguiling to many, country living may become scarcer as available land for development in the GTA's 905 nears saturation. Traditional suburban development — the spread-out detached-home neighbourhoods where the car is king — could be a thing of the past as municipal governments and developers confront "smart growth." In places like Brampton, Oshawa and Mississauga, plans are to intensify to more high-density projects.

Bruce Rudichuk, president of Intracorp, builder of The Meadows in the Glen, has seen lot sizing steadily decline. "Greenfield developments are getting scarcer, homes more compact. Redirecting growth to urban





The Verandas, by Geranium Homes in Port Hope, features an elegant great room.

centres is the growing trend," he says.

That reality sparked Mr. Gormley to action. Growing up in Rexdale in the 1960s, he says he's seen the changes brought by urban sprawl. "But in Glen Williams we shoulder a protected conservation area, promising no development to obstruct fabulous sunset views and seasonal changes of the Halton Hills."

In Markham, new development is coming under stricter municipal review, but building is still strong. "Our homes appeal to first-time buyers, young families and young professionals," says Meena Sharma, president of RegalCraft Homes, which has been building new homes in Markham for a decade and recently launched The Legacy. But there is urgency on the part of many buyers, she observes. "Around the GTA builders are facing a shortage of land on which to build. What we are building right now may be one of the few remaining opportunities for families to buy a new detached home within an easy commute to work, shopping, schools and recreation facilities."

The Legacy at Wismer Commons, situ-

ated west of Markham Road, north of 16th Avenue, is named after the Wismer Family, one of the pioneer families of Markham, who arrived here in the early 1800s.

Construction of The Legacy's two-and-half-storey stone-and-brick homes commences this month. Prices (all approximate) start at \$654,000 for a 2,366-sq.-ft. house on a 35-ft. lot to \$727,000 for a 2,500-sq.-ft. home on a 41-ft. lot, and \$779,000 for a 2,545-sq.-ft. home on a 45-ft. lot; and tops out at \$875,000 for a 3,600-sq.-ft. house, also on a 45-ft. lot.

Among the project's features are nine-foot ceilings on the main floor and basement; coffered ceilings in the family room, living room and dining room; kitchen cabinets with crown mouldings and valance lighting and granite kitchen countertops.

"Buyers have come to understand that time is ticking on the availability of affordable detached homes in Markham," Ms. Sharma says.

In some outer reaches of the 905, pressures are less acute. "The greenbelt is a wonderful thing, leading many buyers to opt for more reasonably sized lots," says Sue Webb Smith,

marketing director of Geranium Homes, builder of The Verandas, an enclave of 117 homes in Port Hope. "Our main markets are boomers and empty nesters. They don't need 3,500-sq.-ft. homes, and don't want the lifestyle of a condo or an apartment."

Located south of the 401, The Verandas (occupancy is January 2012) is close to the shops and the eateries of one of Southern Ontario's prettiest towns, and a short stroll to acres of parklands, playgrounds and hiking trails. There's good fishing in the waters of the Ganaraska River that flows through town to the lake.

Set on 42- and 48-foot lots, this development has 10 bungalow designs of two- and three-bedrooms with optional plans for finished basements. Starting from the mid-\$200,000s, house sizes range from more than 1,300 sq. ft. to about 2,400 sq. ft.

With plans to install a backyard pool with water features, Mr. Gormley feels no need to own a cottage. "We have fresh air, tall trees and tranquility here. Our family can spend quality time enjoying the cottage experience everyday right at home." PH