



# January 2016 Newsletter

## Merry Christmas & Welcome to 2016



As the holiday season comes to an end, we find ourselves reviewing the past year and those who helped URA to conduct another successful year. URA was active on a number of key issues such as Unionville Main Street Vision Plan, Varley Plaza redevelopment, Unionville Home Society redevelopment and Times Group and Scardred 7 down zonings on Highway 7.

We also made great progress on GO Train anti-whistle with the tremendous effort of Shanta Sundarason and Philip Blachier to assemble a 2,300 person petition, which pushed the City to commit to this project. Another 1,300 person petition was helpful in stopping the City from banning skating on Toogood Pond. We also hosted our third annual Christmas party with UVA and SURF on December 7 at Stiver Mill, joined by 80 plus attendees with food donated by Unionville Main Street businesses.

For 2016, we will be working many of the above issues. Also coming is the York Region Transportation Master Plan and Markham's comprehensive zoning bylaw project with infill housing, rooming houses and home occupation being some of the controversial items. Ontario is also reviewing Greenbelt and Growth Plan legislation and will likely introduce carbon pricing to combat climate change.

*Stay Tuned for an Eventful Year!*

Alick Siu

## Next Members Meeting featuring Mayor Scarpitti, January 18<sup>th</sup> PAN AM Centre (7:00 - 9:00 PM)

We have invited Mayor Frank Scarpitti to pay his annual visit to Unionville Ratepayers Association Members meeting to discuss the following subjects

- Unionville Main Street vision plan
- Markham strategic plan 2015-19
- Comprehensive zoning bylaw
- Toogood pond skating
- Tree preservation in intensification areas
- York University
- Markham Centre and Hwy 7 development and road construction

*Looking forward to seeing you there!*

## Unionville Home Society Redevelopment



The background to this issue is discussed in our December newsletter. The Community Liaison Committee (CLC), including representatives from URA, met on December 16 and reviewed a preliminary site map and master schedule. The CLC will meet quarterly.

A community information meeting will be held on January 6, 2016 at the Hilton Toronto Markham Suites Hotel, 8500 Warden Ave.

A Design Charrette will be held on January 13 to 15 at the Pan Am Centre.

The public is welcome at both events. Details will be made available at <http://minto.com/heritagevillage>

Contact  
Information

[president@unionvilleratepayers.com](mailto:president@unionvilleratepayers.com)

<http://www.unionvilleratepayers.com>

## Varley Plaza Redevelopment - update



Here is one issue that will not go away! Although UVA has been leading the community response on this file, URA has a long history with this development (see URA newsletter, September, 2015).

The recent issue has been about preservation of the large trees on the property and on neighbouring properties. Despite protests, the many mature trees on the Tribute land that currently act as a buffer between the soon-to-be-demolished plaza and the homes to the south will be removed to allow for construction of underground parking. The parking garage for the new condo building will extend south of the footprint of the building almost all the way to the lot line.

The affected homeowners are currently negotiating arrangements for the trees on their own properties that may be affected when their root systems are disturbed. Because the underground parking comes all the way to the lot line, the trees removed on the Tribute side cannot be replaced by large trees. There will be some ornamental trees planted along the south side of the building but they will be in planters.

The particularly disturbing thing in this situation was that Tribute used the presence of the doomed trees, acting as a buffer, as a key justification for the development when the whole proposal was challenged at the Ontario Municipal Board in 2013. And more recently the planner acting on behalf of Tribute has said at least twice that Tribute never had any intention of saving the trees. This raises serious ethical concerns.

There is one final opportunity to thwart the removal of the trees. City staff is required by the Development Services Committee (DSC) of City Council to report back before signing a final agreement with Tribute. However, according to the way the law works, final approval is in the hands of staff, not the DSC or the full City Council.

There are a number of lessons to be learned from this debacle. Anyone who has tried to remove a mature tree from their own property will understand that the City seems to have a two-tiered tree preservation regime -- one for homeowners and one for developers. The URA and its partner organizations have made recommendations to the City to strengthen our tree bylaws and policies so this sort of thing never happens again. The URA will be working with the City in the new year to make sure our recommendations are implemented.

Tribute is planning to begin construction in January.

## Skating on Toogood Pond

This item was discussed in our December newsletter but there continue to be updates.

Perhaps you saw the recent headlines in the *Economist and Sun*? First skating was to be banned on Toogood Pond and then there was a reprieve.

Picking up the story from the last newsletter, on December 7, General Committee reviewed a staff report that recommended "not permitting" skating on Toogood Pond. Despite deputations from numerous residents and URA, Committee approved this recommendation, due to the inflated cost of safe maintenance suggested by City staff. This was the basis of the initial headline about a ban. However, there clearly was a minority of councillors who wished to study the matter further, particularly cost reduction.



## Skating on Toogood Pond (continued)

During the subsequent week, the community was able to marshal its forces with a petition and deputations from children and adults, thereby persuading City Council to reverse the decision. The situation at the moment remains the same as the past two years. The City will not clear the ice but nor will it ban skating.

However -- and this is the important part -- the City has also agreed to work with the community via a "working group" to find an affordable way to safely maintain the ice so that we can return to the situation as it existed for approximately 30 years until 2013 -- a wide open sheet of ice with room for multiple games of shinny, free skating and winter carnivals -- an important community, tourism and heritage asset. It is the aim of the URA to bring skating back to Toogood Pond as soon as the weather allows.

## Ontario Climate Change Strategy



The Paris climate change conference is now behind us and was rated a success by participants. Canada was well represented, including by Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Wynne. Federal and Provincial leaders will be convening within 90 days to develop a new Canadian strategy. Likely the national strategy will include an amalgam of provincial plans.

Public consultation on Ontario's Climate Change Strategy started in early 2015. In summary, using 1990 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as the base, Ontario targets to achieve 20% reduction in GHG emissions by 2020 and 80% reduction by 2050. Currently, in 2014, our GHG emissions were 7% below 1990 levels (i.e. one third of the way to 2020 target).

The Province has concluded that existing progress is insufficient and more emissions reduction measures will be needed, especially in the transportation and building sectors. A Cap and Trade regime will be set up in conjunction with California and Quebec under the Western Climate Initiative. Details are not yet available, but large emitters and petroleum distributors will be required to have an emission permit, with extra permits auctioned to companies that need them.

Ontario will be releasing details of its proposed Cap and Trade system early in 2016.

## York Region Transportation Plan

Transportation and traffic congestion always rate as the #1 concern of Markham residents. York Region is in the process of updating its Transportation Master Plan. Public meetings and surveys have been held over the past year, including this December. The Plan is shaping up to have 5 objectives:

- Create a World Class Transit System
- Develop a Road Network fit for the Future
- Integrate Active Transportation in Urban Areas
- Maximize the Potential of Employment Areas
- Making the Last Mile Work

While all of these have interesting aspects, certainly the most controversial will be the second one – the improved road network. This includes constructing a finer road grid in new development areas (a good thing), more crossings of Highway 404 (a good thing), widening of all arterial roads to 6 lanes for HOV/transit (historically very controversial in Markham) and working with the Province on new and extended expressways (rejected by province). Although the Plan is not yet final, an environmental assessment is underway for widening of Bayview Ave. and one is planned for 2016 for widening of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. URA plans to set up a transportation committee to study this topic in more detail to further inform our members.

## 2016 Markham Budget Highlights



After three months of committee and public meetings, Markham Council passed the 2016 budget on December 15, 2015. In addition to routine operations and regular small capital renovations and upgrades of existing City facilities, there are several capital items of interest to the Unionville community.

- \$12.5M (Markham's share) for new midblock crossing over Highway 404 north of Highway 7 and northbound offramp extension
- \$10.5M to continue design and construction of portions of Miller Ave. from Birchmount to Woodbine
- \$9.5M to construct Verclaire Bridge across the Rouge River in Markham Centre
- \$4.1M to continue the Emerald Ash Borer project
- \$4.0M invested in Markham District Energy Inc.
- \$3.3M for Highway 7 streetscape, consistent with York Region work to widen from Town Centre Blvd to Sciberras Ave.
- \$3.2M to continue construction of the Multi Use Path from 16<sup>th</sup> Ave to Bob Hunter Park. Work in 2016 phase will be east of Milne Dam
- \$800K to implement GO Train anti-whistling. While the 2016 construction program has yet to be set, we believe this should be sufficient for 2016 work
- \$48K to develop a Master Plan for Carleton Park
- \$35K for design of a public washroom on Unionville Main Street, consistent with the Vision Plan

The 2016 tax increase for the City of Markham (excluding York Region and School Board increases) will be 2.44% or \$27 per year for the average Markham residential property.

## What is the URA?

A non-partisan association of the residents of Unionville

- ✓ Boundaries: Warden Ave. to McCowan Rd. and Sixteenth Ave. to Hwy 407
- ✓ Founded in 1974 to protect the interests of the community
- ✓ Registered with the Province of Ontario and the City of Markham

## What does URA do?

- ✓ Stays current on events, activities and issues in Unionville
- ✓ Keeps our members informed through regular email broadcasts and monthly meetings (with guest speakers on hot topics)
- ✓ Ensures our residents' views are known and communicated to local, regional and provincial government officials and representatives
- ✓ Provides information on our website on active issues
- ✓ Organizes special events (e.g. All-Candidates meetings during elections, issue based meetings)

## Join Us!!

Your Voice  
Makes Our Voice Stronger

For more membership info, please go to our web site

<http://www.unionvilleratepayers.com/membership.htm>