



**Councillor**

**Mike Del Grande**



**WARD 39 • SCARBOROUGH - AGINCOURT**

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 1

**Dear Neighbour,**

When you elected me, you said you wanted change...you wanted action. Since taking office, my staff and I have worked diligently to tackle the many issues that residents of Scarborough-Agincourt bring to our attention. To date, my office has fielded close to 1,000 calls for assistance. When I visit people in the Ward, speak to people on the telephone or exchange emails, people tell me they are happy. They like receiving a timely response; they like having their concerns taken seriously; they like having their issues resolved. Your kind words of support are very gratifying.

Rather than waiting to receive a complaint, I am proactive. I make it a priority to visit each and every street in the Ward regularly. It is only through this first-hand knowledge that I feel I can properly represent Scarborough-Agincourt at City Hall. I consider these area tours an essential part of my job - I hope you share my view.

Understandably, these frequent tours produce long lists of issues that are referred to staff for action. Whether staff pick up an abandoned shopping cart, prune a tree or clean up garbage dumped in a park, the sooner a problem is dealt with - the better for everyone. Wherever possible, I provide staff with pictures to expedite a resolution - after all, a picture often speaks a thousand words. While unorthodox, the approach works and staff appreciate the extra effort.

Our community is changing. Contrary to some reports, I have taken the initiative to be as inclusive as possible when dealing with new pressures. Issues like rooming houses, marijuana grow houses, abandoned homes and declining property standards affect all of us equally. The most effective way to deal with them is - together. To this end, one of my key objectives is to support existing community associations and assist in the establishment of new ones. Anyone interested in participating is strongly encouraged to contact my office.

In dealing with residents, I try to treat everyone fairly and equally - just as I would hope to be treated. At the end of the day, rules and regulations apply to all. If doing the right thing costs me a vote, so be it. To do the right thing - this is my maxim and I will not - cannot - change it.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent you at City Hall.

Your Neighbour,

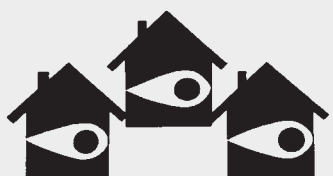
*Mike Del Grande*

**Mike Del Grande**  
Councillor, Ward 39  
Scarborough-Agincourt

(Please visit my website at: [www.mikedelgrande.ca](http://www.mikedelgrande.ca))

**What's Inside**

- **Ward 39 Updates** P2
  - **Bicycle Safety** P2
  - **Marijuana Grow House Update** P3
  - **The City's 2005 Budget** P4
  - **Ward Issues in Brief** P4
- Let Me Explain...
- New Garbage Bins coming to Ward 39
  - House prices in Ward 39 increase in 2004
  - Furniture Recycling
  - 2004 Office Budget
  - McNicoll Avenue Project
  - McNicoll Avenue Bus Loop
  - Reporting Crime
  - On-Street Parking and Snow Plowing
- **Keep In Touch!** P4



**Marijuana Grow House Meetings**

Please attend one of these important community information meetings:

- Thursday April 21 - Highland Heights Public School - 35 Glendower Circuit - 7-9 PM
- Monday April 25 - Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate - 200 Fundy Bay Blvd - 7-9 PM
- Tuesday April 26 - L'Amoreaux Collegiate - 2501 Bridletowne Circle - 7-9 PM



There will be staff on hand from City departments, the Police and Crime Concern to discuss the problem and how we can

**Take Back our Community**

**Mike Del Grande**

**416-392-1374**

# Ward 39 Updates

## Ward Improvements

- 1 Watch for an invitation to my September 10 Environment Day event at KidsTown
- 2 Worked with interested neighbours to decide on Marilyn Avenue improvements
- 3 Pedestrian-activated crossing light approved for Warden Avenue, north of Finch
- 4 New street light approved for Kennedy Road at Havendale to make turning safer
- 5 Birchcrest Park improvement design finalized with input from the community
- 6 New bus shelter finally installed at Kennedy and McNicoll
- 7 New advance green signal installed for peak AM period – Warden and McNicoll
- 8 New street light approved (with intersection realignment) at Redlea and Steeles
- 9 New advance green signal installed for weekends – Warden and Steeles
- 10 Increased east-west green signal time at Warden and Bamburgh Circle
- 11 New traffic study requested (request for stop sign) on Beverly Glen
- 12 Working with Bamburgh Gardens Plaza owners to improve safety on property
- 13 Supported community garden and additional community funding in Chester Le area
- 14 Working with Toronto Community Housing to beautify their properties
- 15 Road construction in 2005 – L'Amoreaux Drive from Tambrook to Birchmount
- 16 Road construction in 2005 – Silver Springs Blvd from Birchmount to Revlis
- 17 New sidewalk installation – Marilyn Avenue from Reidmount to GO Rail line

★ *busted growhouses (43 growhouses busted to date)*



## Development News

- A Planning staff are reviewing site plan application for Splendid China Mall. Watch for additional public meetings.
- B Public Meeting held for Waltman Building Group application for Sanwood and Canongate – 53 single-family homes
- C Planning staff are ready to approve site plan application for Chinese Baptist Church proposal at 3223 Kennedy Road
- D Preliminary discussions held with St. John's Chinese Anglican Church for their proposal to build at 1030 McNicoll Avenue

## Bicycle Safety

**B**icycle safety – or rather, pedestrian safety around bicycles – is a serious concern. I receive numerous calls from people, particularly seniors, who feel very uncomfortable walking in the Ward because of bicycle traffic on our sidewalks.

A bicycle is considered a vehicle under the Provincial Highway Traffic Act. The City also has a by-law that forbids cycling on the sidewalk if your wheels are larger than 24 inches in diameter.

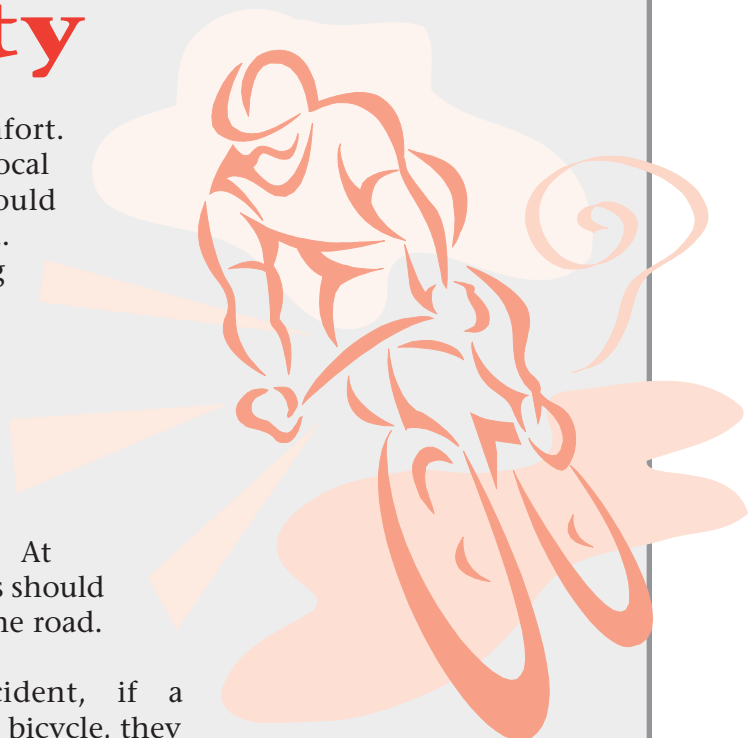
A number of noteworthy violations and set fines listed in the Act are:

Careless driving	\$ 265
Disobey stop sign – fail to stop	\$ 90
Failure to yield to pedestrian	\$ 90
No bell (horn)	\$ 90

The plain truth is: enforcement is difficult. Cyclists should know that they are liable and can be sued when collisions happen and they are at fault. I would ask everyone who rides a bicycle in our community to respect pedestrians and their right to use the

sidewalk in comfort. When riding on local streets, cyclists should ride on the road. When riding along our arterial roads, cyclists riding on the sidewalk should go slowly, use their bell or horn to warn pedestrians and remember to share the sidewalk. At intersections, cyclists should always walk across the road.

As with any accident, if a pedestrian is hit by a bicycle, they should call the Police immediately and report the incident.



# Marijuana Grow House Update

In the last 15 months, the fight against marijuana grow operations in Ward 39 has escalated. There is more police activity closing more locations, new lawn signs and more communication from my office.

Our fight against these set-ups in Scarborough-Agincourt is no different than any other part of the city – grow houses are everywhere in the GTA – except that our efforts are more visible, vocal and successful.

In working to get rid of grow operations, we are doing everything we can with the tools we have. Together with Police from 41 and 42 Divisions, representatives from other levels of government as well as City departments, we have established a task force to ensure that every means available is used to its potential. With my full support, City staff have initiated very successful pilot projects in Scarborough-Agincourt that other politicians and law enforcement groups are now watching closely.

Over the past year, we have employed three new tools in the war against grow operations: lawn signs, automatic Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) Orders and community notices.

## Lawn Signs

Whenever a grow house is busted, our MLS staff now erect a sign in the front yard to notify the community of their efforts. The signs remain in place for 3 or 4 days at each location. I ask for these signs to be installed for a number of reasons. Firstly, neighbours often do not know when the police bust a grow house and I believe that everyone has a right to know what's going on. Secondly, the signs help remind neighbours what grow house activity may look like, so they can recognize it when they see it again. Lastly, the signs are notice – loud and clear – to existing and would-be growers that Ward 39 residents are vigilant and are cooperating with the Police. At first, I was criticized for supporting the use of these signs. Their effectiveness has now attracted a second look by other Councillors struggling with the same problem.

## Automatic MLS Orders

Besides being a hazard to the immediate neighbours, grow houses compromise the physical structure of the home and fill it with toxic mould. At my urging, our MLS department no longer needs to see the damage before they issue an Order to address it. Orders are now immediately issued – requiring the owner to submit Environmental and Structural Engineering Reports to prove their properties are safe. These Orders are registered on title to alert potential buyers.

This initiative is intended to bring the fight straight to the source of the problem – absentee landlords. In exchange for their 12 post-dated rent cheques, absentee landlords abdicate their responsibilities as property owners and neighbours. In doing so, they allow grow houses to flourish. After the bust, the home is either re-sold or re-rented to unsuspecting people. In my opinion, this is morally and legally wrong. As more landlords hear about these Orders and of the costs associated with restoring a former grow house, they will pay more attention to their properties.

## Community Notices

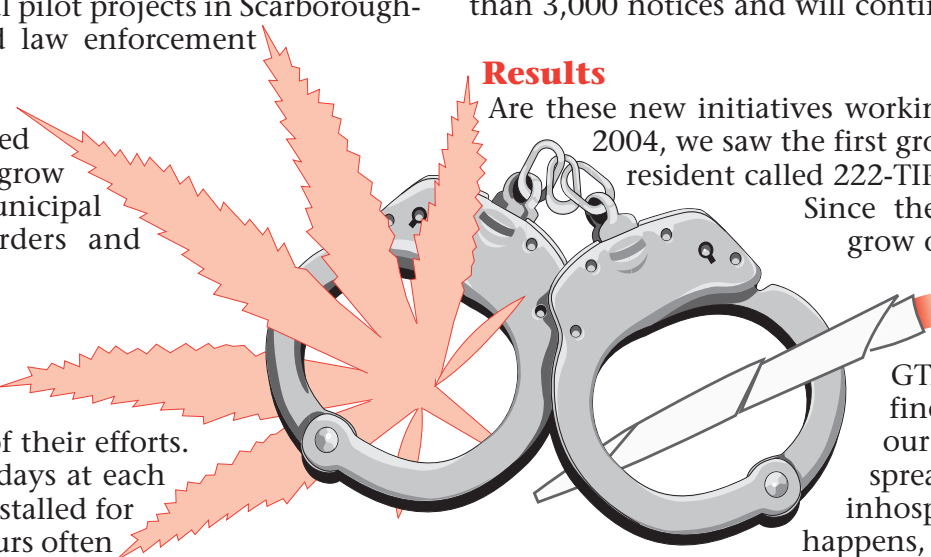
After every bust, I send out notices to the surrounding community. As with the lawn signs, their purpose is to inform neighbours of the activity so they can better recognize telltale signs if an operator tries to start another grow house. In 2005 alone, I have sent out more than 3,000 notices and will continue to do so.

## Results

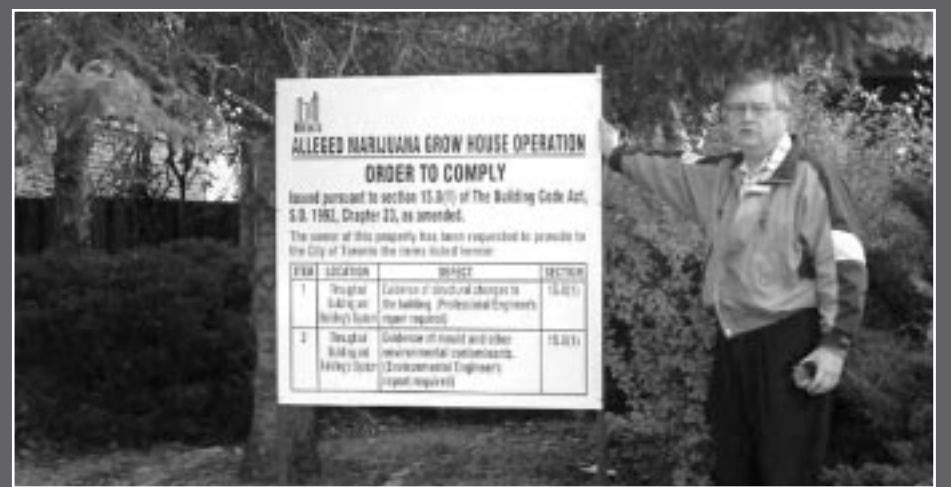
Are these new initiatives working? You bet they are. In January 2004, we saw the first grow house busted in Ward 39 after a resident called 222-TIPS. Another bust quickly followed. Since then, we have seen more than 40 grow ops shut down or abandoned. It is important to stress – we don't have more grow houses in Ward 39 than anywhere else in the GTA – we are just doing a better job of finding them. With each new bust, our community is safer and word spreads that Scarborough-Agincourt is inhospitable to grow operators. As this happens, property values invariably benefit.

We have also seen – for the first time – grow houses being vacated before the police arrive to bust them. The grow house operators are feeling 'the heat' and are quickly becoming uncomfortable doing business in Ward 39. While I'm not happy that these operators may be setting up shop elsewhere in the City, my first responsibility is to this Ward. The recent fire on Rainier Square highlighted the danger and the potential impact on the community.

Over the past 15 months, I have worked very closely with City staff and the Police to crack down on this scourge. I thank everyone, particularly the Drug Squad at 42 Division, for their commitment and hard work in eradicating this problem. I would especially like to thank those of you who are getting involved by reporting suspicious activity. Like me – you clearly want to improve our community. A watchful community that cares is a grow operator's worst enemy. I'm glad that we have so many people in Ward 39 watching out for them. Together, let's take back our neighbourhood.



Fire at grow house on Rainier Square – Fire fighters worked diligently to put out fire quickly.



Councillor Del Grande in front of a Grow House sign erected by the City after a grow house bust.



Meeting with owners and tenants of the Bamburgh Garden Plaza to improve safety on property.



With The Heathwood Ratepayers' Association at a meeting on residential development.

# The City's 2005 Budget

**A**t the end of February, City Council debated the 2005 budget. I voted against it and feel it is important to explain why. You work hard for your money and your tax dollars should be spend wisely. I could not support a budget that didn't reflect this.

The budget that was approved included a number of disappointing "firsts" for the City. It was the first time that Council approved selling assets to cover operating expenses; the first time that Council approved a budget that wasn't balanced; and the first time Council approved borrowing more than \$ 200 million in a single year. It was also the first time that the Province asked the City to clean up it's own financial mess. Frankly, I don't blame them.

The process started with the announcement that residential property taxes would increase by 3% - no more, no less. For me, this was a

clear signal that everything was decided before the process began. In my opinion, doing this eliminated any opportunity for us to find real savings in the \$ 8 billion that we will spend in 2005. In the end, taxes and user fees are going up and service levels are staying the same. That's simply not fair to the people who pay the bills - you.

During the debate, I fought hard for what I believed the residents of my Ward and the City want and need. People have told me that a number of things were needed from this budget. They wanted more fairness in the delivery of services across the City, more money for the Police to fight street violence and grow houses and above all more respect for the fact that it is taxpayers' money spent at City Hall. Unfortunately, what we got was more suburban money flowing downtown, more money for "pet" projects and more debt.



Presenting the "Music Scarborough Award" at the 2004 Wishing Well Lions' celebration.



2004 Scarborough Job Fair - meeting with Scarborough West and North Social Services team.

## Ward Issues in Brief

### Let Me Explain...

In my newsletters, I make regular announcements about all kinds of Ward improvements that have been approved by City Council. Getting a project approved by this Council is reason enough to celebrate; however, it is not the end of the process. The next step is to get the funding approved. Sometimes this happens in the current year, sometimes we have to wait longer.

### New Garbage Bins coming to Ward 39

Later this Spring, the City will be testing new garbage/recycling bins. These new bins will include larger advertising that will increase revenues for the City. The test will determine if the bins are right for the City based on public feedback. The test units in Ward 39 will be located at Finch/Victoria Park, Finch/Warden and Finch/Kennedy. I encourage everyone to drive past one and contact my office with your input.

### House Prices in Ward 39 Increase in 2004

Ward 39 is part of the real estate district known as E5. The boundaries of E5 are Steeles, Victoria Park, Kennedy and Highway 401. Between 2003 and 2004, the average selling price in the district increased from \$256,498 to \$262,855. These average prices are the 3rd highest in all of Scarborough. As we all work together to improve our community, these figures will keep going up.

### Furniture Recycling

Instead of throwing away your used furniture, please consider the ultimate in recycling - REUSE. The West Hill Furniture Bank (a City-supported, non-profit agency) collects and distributes good quality, used furniture to needy families in the Scarborough area. Most of their clients are people moving out of shelters into apartments - as you can imagine, these people don't have very much. You can contact the Furniture Bank at (416) 286-2441.

### 2004 Office Budget

During 2004, I spent \$38,630 of a possible \$53,100 for office expenses. Of the amount spent, \$25,467 or 66% was for communications. Other amounts included: rent (\$2,004), equipment (\$2,097), meetings (\$1,518), translations (\$1,475) and other (\$1,814). There were **NO** trips expensed, but mileage was \$3,196 and two cellular phones for the office cost \$1,059.

### McNicoll Avenue Project

In my last newsletter, I reported that the McNicoll Watermain Project (from Kennedy to Brookshire) would start last Fall. Problems have delayed the project until this summer. The watermain installation will take close to a year to complete. When this phase of the project is finished, the City will be upgrading McNicoll Avenue (from Kennedy to Victoria Park) and all of its intersections at a total cost of almost \$5 million. A public meeting will be held to solicit your input as soon as the preliminary drawings are ready.

### McNicoll Avenue Bus Loop

Many people told me that they want the bus loop at McNicoll and Kennedy cleaned up. Right now, the loop is nothing more than a gravel road - well below the City's standard. Earlier this year, I was able to convince the TTC to upgrade the loop. Unfortunately, budget cuts have forced them to defer all non-essential projects. I am still working with our Works staff to have this improvement included in the McNicoll Avenue project.

### Reporting Crime

Funds in the Police budget are allocated according to need with more resources being sent to areas where there is more crime. Unfortunately, not everyone reports crime when it happens. Regardless of whether or not an arrest will be made or stolen property is recovered, it is vital that everyone who is the victim of crime reports it to the Police. In the long run, more crime being reported will bring more Police Officers into our community - and that's a good thing for all of us.

### On-Street Parking and Snow Plowing

Last year, the residents of the Heathwood Community voted to change the parking regulations in their community to 'No Parking - 2 AM to 6 AM'. Many residents have reported that the quality of the City's snow plowing efforts have improved as a result. When my office receives calls about poor snow plowing, we ask staff to send the trucks back. If cars are still parked on the street, there isn't much that we can do. If you want to initiate similar changes in your neighbourhood in time for next winter, please contact my office.

## Keep in touch!

CITY HALL • 100 Queen Street West, Suite A1 Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2  
TEL: 416-392-1374 • FAX: 416-392-7431 • E-MAIL: [councillor\\_delgrande@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_delgrande@toronto.ca)