



Councillor

Mike Del Grande



WARD 39 • SCARBOROUGH - AGINCOURT

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1

Dear Neighbour,

Welcome to the first edition of my Community Report. It is my hope to bring to you at least two Reports each year to share information that concerns you as a resident of Ward 39. The Reports will focus primarily on Scarborough-Agincourt issues since these rarely receive media attention and have the potential to significantly impact our quality of life.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you and your family at City Hall. I consider your vote of confidence last November as an honour and a privilege. In the lead up to the election, I asked for your trust and you were good enough to give it to me. Now that I have assumed my new responsibilities, I can promise that I will never ask for your trust again – I am prepared to earn it.

I would also like to say a couple of words about my personal philosophy since these are the principals by which I plan on conducting myself as your representative. I believe.....that the residents of the City deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. I believe..... that the residents of the City work hard for the taxes they pay and that the public treasury should be treated with this in mind. I believe..... that the foundations of a great City lie in its neighbourhoods and communities and that these should be protected. I believe..... that City Councillors have a responsibility to represent the residents of their Ward above all others and to make their votes on all key issues easily accessible. Finally, I believe that Torontonians want to live in a community and a City that is safe, clean and affordable.

In the past, I have been involved with my local Community Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. I have been aware of challenges facing the residents of Scarborough-Agincourt and commit to dealing with these issues as my first priority. For example, you have recently experienced several hydro outages. I have already met on numerous occasions with Senior Management from Toronto Hydro to discuss their plans for returning reliable electrical service to our community. You informed me of traffic problems around major intersections. I have requested that Traffic Operations staff initiate studies across the Ward to suggest improvements. You informed me of rooming houses and other Municipal problems plaguing our Ward. I have established a Task Force with representatives from our Buildings, Municipal Licensing and Standards as well as the Fire Departments to aggressively deal with the proliferation of rooming houses. It includes illegal 2nd suite apartments in our community, which have recently been on the rise. There are others and rest assured there WILL BE action.

Twenty-one years ago, after living in several parts of Toronto, I chose the Scarborough-Agincourt community to raise my family. Since then, I have seen first-hand a vibrant neighbourhood slip into decline. I plan on staying in this community because I love it. I share your interests in seeing this community become vibrant again and the decline stopped and reversed. Over the next three years, you WILL see changes. I look forward to your participation in this change for our mutual benefit.

Let me close by saying that I am committed to being accessible to you. My personal policy is to return all telephone calls within 24 hours (sooner, if possible). I am pleased to meet you in your home, in the local library, Community Centre or wherever most convenient. If you have any questions or concerns about your City, your community or dealings with City Hall, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Your Neighbour,

Mike Del Grande
Councillor, Ward 39
Scarborough-Agincourt

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Ward 39 Developments

Anyone who has driven in Ward 39 would agree that there is plenty of room for improvement in the way our intersections work. A lack of proper turning lanes, a lack of advance-green lights and poor timing between intersections makes getting from Point A to Point B that much more difficult and takes much longer.

Area residents have also suggested a number of other kinds of improvements - from parking by-law changes, to new bus shelters - which need to be considered. These requests are forwarded to the appropriate

staff in various departments for review. Before getting to City Hall, as a long-time Ward resident, I was fully aware of many of the problem intersections and service deficiencies. I wasted no time in requesting our Traffic Operations staff to conduct feasibility studies for changes. Provincial Legislation requires that we test the current situation against a series of standards or "warrants" prior to implementing changes.

If the standards are met, staff will recommend the change; if they are not, they cannot.

Unfortunately, this process takes time and the studies are done on a first-come, first-served basis.

Attached is a map showing the locations/issues currently under review. If you know of an intersection or any other kind of improvement that would enhance the quality of life in Ward 39, not currently highlighted on the map, please let me know. I will have it put in queue to be looked at in the near future.

List of items on map

- 1 Warden & McNicoll – southbound left turn priority in mornings
- 2 Warden & Bamburgh Circle (south) – west bound left turn priority in mornings
- 3 Finch & Birchmount – east bound left turn priority all day
- 4 McNicoll & Birchmount – westbound left turn priority (AM); eastbound left turn priority (PM)
- 5 3440 Pharmacy – request to install pedestrian cross walk
- 6 McNicoll & Stonebridge – request to install pedestrian crosswalk
- 7 McNicoll & Stonebridge - install sidewalk on south side of McNicoll
- 8 Kennedy & Purcell – west bound left turn priority in evenings
- 9 Wintermute – request to install speed humps
- 10 Reidmount & Sheppard – install sidewalk on west side of Reidmount
- 11 McNicoll & Kennedy – request for new TTC shelter on southeast corner
- 12 Steeles & Mount Castle – request for new TTC shelter on north side of Steeles
- 13 Sheppard @ GO Tracks – various improvements to eliminate train whistling



- 14 Glendower & Birchmount – new parking regulations
- 15 Fundy Bay – new parking regulations in school zone
- 16 Silver Springs – new parking regulations in school zone
- 17 Brookmill – new parking regulations in school zone

Hydro Reliability

In early February, a letter was sent by Toronto Hydro regarding service reliability in parts of our community. This letter was distributed at my request, to answer some of the questions raised by Ward residents, seeking answers from Toronto Hydro subsequent to the recent outages.

My family has experienced many of these outages and I know – first hand – how disruptive a power failure can be. Repeated outages, especially those that come in the winter, can create serious hardship. As such, Senior Management at Toronto Hydro, has been made fully aware that I consider the return of reliability to our community an absolute priority. I have already met with Hydro Management on several occasions. I will continue to do so on a regular basis until the problems causing these outages have been resolved and our community enjoys the same kind of reliable service as the rest of the City.

According to Hydro, there is no connection between the outages that occurred after this past summer's blackout and the subsequent ones. The earlier failures were system-wide and related to transformer overloading as a result of unprecedented demand during the summer heat wave. Under the circumstances, these failures were somewhat predictable due to overwhelming power consumption. I have been told that these outages impacted small groups of hydro customers at a time and, in each case, were addressed with either repairs or replacements of equipment. I am informed that, in 2003, a total of nine transformers were impacted in this fashion.

The failures that occurred since the summer are associated with switchgear failures – located at transfer stations – and underground cable failures. To address these issues, Hydro has committed to fast-tracking their planned Capital Improvement

programs in Ward 39 and to replace the problematic equipment as quickly as possible.

Hydro staff has told me that, on average, a homeowner in the City of Toronto will experience two power outages per year. During the course of implementing their Capital program, this number will increase since much of the repair work involved requires planned outages. In most cases, you will be given advance notice of these planned outages and they will be completed as quickly as possible.

From my perspective, the bottom line is this – our community deserves to enjoy the same kind of reliability as the rest of the City. I will continue to work with Hydro management to ensure that this standard is met and maintained for Ward 39. As more information is made available, I will be sure to keep you informed.

Rooming Houses

When City Council debated and approved the new Official Plan several years ago, a recurring theme was Council's commitment to the stability of our established communities. It was decided - rightfully - that our residential neighbourhoods deserved protection from sudden and drastic change.

The purpose of the Plan, and the accompanying by-laws, is to establish rules serving two functions. Firstly, to inform all property owners what kinds of development are and are not allowed in a community. Secondly, to provide predictability to all property owners as to what they can expect from neighbours. If you have chosen to live in a single-family community, you have the right to expect that your neighbours have chosen to - and will - do the same.

The worst changes to a community generally happen gradually. Over the past 5 years, our community has seen an explosion in single-family homes illegally converted into multi-family residences. Today, the problem has reached drastic proportions with far-reaching impact.

Most residents of Scarborough-Agincourt will be pleased to know that my position on the issue is exactly as yours - this should not have been allowed to happen in the first place and will not be allowed to continue from here on.

During last year's election campaign, I attended a meeting hosted by the Heathwood Community Association - representatives from the community most impacted by the problem. In attendance were staff from Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) - the department that enforces the by-laws governing the use of private property. More than 400 residents came out to discuss how these multi-family residences were impacting their quality of life - a clear sign of how passionate this community is about the problem. City staff involved in this meeting were shocked to hear of the magnitude of the problem. It was clear that a communication problem between area residents and City staff existed and needed to be fixed. In order for staff to effectively enforce by-laws, they need to know where the problems are. This was not happening.

Immediately after taking office, I met with staff from our MLS, Buildings and Fire

departments, to gain an understanding of the role each play in enforcement. Based on those discussions, I pushed for the formation of a Task Force comprised of representatives from all three departments for improved communication and co-ordination.

The results to date have been impressive. Since November, 82 properties have been investigated or are still under investigation. Where rooming houses or illegal second suites are found, the property owner is forced to deal with all three departments rather than just one.

MLS staff issue Notices of Violation to compel the property owner to comply with the zoning. Where necessary, they are prepared to go to court to enforce these Notices. Buildings' department staff follow up includes inspection of the improvements made to the home to accommodate the extra occupants and issuance of Stop Work Orders where illegal construction is found. Finally, Fire Services staff inspect the property to determine whether or not the property owner has created an unsafe living environment.

In addition to the above, staff from our Right of Way Management group - the department charged with enforcing the City's by-laws for boulevards - as well as Parking Enforcement staff, are responding to complaints where driveways have been illegally widened to make room for tenants' vehicles.

A quick word about second suite apartments is required at this point. Toronto has a City-wide policy that allows self-contained, second suite apartments in any single-family residence older than 5 years. There are strict Building and Fire code requirements that must be adhered to. The legal conversion process involves submitting drawings, obtaining a building permit and a minimum of two inspections. There are also parking requirements to ensure that the addition of the apartment will not result in on-street parking. Where they are constructed legally, these second suites can fit seamlessly into the community. If they are done illegally, they can create serious hazards for the occupants and an imposition of the property's neighbours.

While the co-ordination of City staff has proven successful, I have not stopped there. I have met with my Provincial counterpart,

Gerry Phillips, and our community's Federal representative, The Honourable Jim Karygiannis. They have been asked to improve the tools available to City staff to protect our communities from these property owners. Mr. Phillips has been provided with a list of recommended changes to various pieces of Provincial legislation to clarify the rules governing such property uses and has committed to work with me to find the best way the Provincial Government can assist in addressing the situation. Mr. Karygiannis has offered the assistance of his office to contact various Federal Government departments who can aid in combating this problem. Staff from our respective offices will be meeting regularly to discuss the progress on this, and other issues to maintain a continued positive momentum.

What can you do to help? There are obvious, visible signs that a property has been converted from a single family home to a multi-family building. These include:

- extra cars parked on the boulevard and or on the street;
- extra mailboxes;
- extra garbage/recycling;
- weekend construction;
- lots of activity and people coming in and out from a home.

If you see any or all of these signs, you can assist us in doing our job by documenting the evidence and forwarding it to my office. You can do so with my personal assurance that your name will NEVER be disclosed. No one will ever know that you brought this property to our attention. I promise you that the address provided will be visited by MLS staff as quickly as possible and, should their preliminary investigation reveal problems, visits from other City departments will follow until the situation is rectified.

Finally - a word to anyone who is operating or living in a rooming house, or to anyone who has illegally converted their basement into a second suite. PLEASE contact my office immediately to arrange for voluntary inspections of your property. Existing second suites can be made legal and safe, and staff will work with you towards this goal. If we find out from you about the changes you have made to your property, the process is far easier and friendlier.



Presenting Toronto Community Service Volunteer Awards with Mayor David Miller and Councillor Norm Kelly



Meeting area residents at Scarborough's New Year's Levee

Cleaning up our community

When meeting with neighbours during the recent election campaign, a major concern was the decline in the appearance of our neighbourhood. Having watched this happen over the last 20 years is what prompted me to seek elected office. The fact of the matter is - our community does not look now like it did before. Our streets are littered with garbage, the green space on residential streets has slowly disappeared under illegally paved front yards, shopping carts are on practically every corner and property maintenance is at an all-time low.

The City of Toronto has acknowledged its role in this city-wide decline and has embarked upon bold measures to reverse the trend. This season, boulevard grass will be cut more often and street sweepers will make more frequent visits into our communities. Having said that, this is not a problem that can be solved without the help of every property owner. Some of the more serious problems raised and those I have seen on Ward tours are below:

Garbage Collection

I'm sure you will agree that garbage sitting on the curb is unsightly and an eye sore. A Collection Calendar was provided to every home last summer and it details the City's policies for every type of garbage. For example, oversized items and appliances will NOT be collected without prior arrangements. When garbage was on your curb, our By-law Enforcement staff may have talked to you about it. On a recent Ward tour, no less than 70 homes in a small area of the Ward had oversized garbage placed outside. I passed along these addresses to Enforcement staff with a request to give the property owner a "friendly reminder". Before you put something unusual out for collection, check your Calendar. If you are still not sure, call my office to confirm or

request for a copy of the Calendar; I will be happy to deliver one to you.

Driveway widening

So you want to widen your driveway to accommodate another car? Think about this for a moment...if everyone decided to do the same thing, we just lost a lot of green space forever! When you and your neighbours decided to move in, you looked for big front yards and that is the reason they were there.

The City has a by-law that permits your driveway to be as wide as your garage. The aim is to prevent the wholesale elimination of green space from our residential communities and is one I support. If Municipal Licensing and Standards staff find evidence that you are parking anywhere in your front yard other than on the legal portion of your driveway, you will receive a Notice of Violation advising you to stop and delineate your driveway from the illegally widened portion or risk repeated fines.

Shopping Carts

Besides being unsightly, scattered shopping carts create a very unsafe environment. Drivers have to veer to avoid hitting them and children get hurt playing with them.

Retailers provide shopping carts for their customers' convenience while on their property. Removal of the cart from the retailer's property constitutes theft. There are alternatives, such as purchasing a shopping buggy available at grocery stores.

Property Standards

There is a well-respected Urban Environment theory, commonly referred to as "The Broken Window Theory". It suggests that a commu-

nity in decline, if left alone, will continue to decline. This has been witnessed countless times across the United States and is one that Canadians do not want to see happen here at home.

When minor, undesirable situations like garbage and graffiti are not kept in check, the theory suggests that more undesirable things follow as people get comfortable with the new, lower standards. We owe it to ourselves and to each other to be responsible property owners and maintain our properties. Doing so impacts everyone's quality of life and property values.

On-street parking

Illegal parking on our residential streets is the single most frequent complaint we receive. I understand from other Scarborough Councillors that it is true of their Wards as well.

Some parts of the City allow on-street parking and others - Scarborough included - do not. The reason is simple - Scarborough was developed after it was recognized that accommodation needed to be made for off-street parking. Councillors from Scarborough have previously looked at adding on-street parking and, on several occasions, decided against it since snow removal is harder and less effective while creating an unsafe environment for children. The consensus among current Councillors is to maintain the current by-laws for these very reasons.

While our Parking Enforcement staff do not look for cars to ticket on residential streets, they will respond to complaints. If you have received a parking ticket or park regularly on the street, I would suggest making alternative arrangements such as parking at neighbours not using their driveway.

Environment Day

The first City of Toronto Environment Day was held in 1996. Since then, attendance has grown considerably as Works and Emergency Services became accessible in the comfort of our communities. I am pleased to announce that Ward 39 Environment Day 2004 will be held on:

**Saturday, May 8th
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Kidstown, 3159 Birchmount Rd, south of McNicoll Ave.

Tons of compost and wood chips will be available, free for the taking, to cater to avid gardeners wanting to get a head start on the planting season.

Together with Enbridge Gas, I will host a family fun day. Please stop by and enjoy a hot dog. Proceeds will be donated to Agincourt Community Services.

You will have an opportunity to replace lost or damaged Blue, Grey and Green bins; purchase composters, rain barrels and water efficiency kits; drop off used tires, polystyrene and hazardous household waste; drop off used books, linen, clothing, computers and eye glasses as well as donate non-perishable food items to the Daily Bread Food Bank for the less fortunate.

Please mark this date in your calendar...look forward to seeing you!

Next Issue

- The challenges facing Ward 39 and the opportunities to improve the lives for us who call it home are complex; they require more space than this newsletter permits.
- In the Fall, I will send out another Report on upcoming issues, concerns and proposed improvements. Here's a sneak preview:
 - I have been working with Traffic Operations to improve the safety in school zones. You will notice from the map on page 2 that work is already underway at three schools in the Ward - the first three brought to my attention - and staff will look at others as time permits. I will address proposed changes and why staff feel these changes make for safer school zones.
 - The media is reporting a virtual explosion in Marijuana Grow Houses in our City. They pose real dangers to the community and work is underway in partnership with Ottawa, Queen's Park and the private sector to locate and combat them. I am working closely with Police and City staff on changes to guarantee the protection of area residents before and after these operations are found and shut down. I will provide you with telltale signs of a Grow House to quickly identify these homes and inform the Police.
 - Speeding on our residential streets is a major problem and (literally) an accident waiting to happen. While the number of speed humps has grown elsewhere in the City, Scarborough Councillors voted against them. I will update you on efforts to convince my colleagues of this improvement for Scarborough, how they work and what you can do to get them on your street.

Keep in touch!

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