

## ***New Toronto Historical Society***

*General Meeting – Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004*

We had the pleasure of having Mark Grimes, City Councillor, Ward 6 Etobicoke-Lakeshore, to have an informal discussion with our Society this evening.

Barry Kemp, president of the Long Branch Historical Society, opened with questions about the plans for the Eastwood Estate. Mark mentioned that he has not yet seen the plans but supports saving the historical value of the original home, such as the original façade and the turrets, but there is no confirmation as of yet as to its destiny.

Another member of the Long Branch Historical Society also asked about the state of the Long Branch bandshell, since it seems as it is being left to ruin. There is a power source in the shell which, although recently is has been locked up, had been left unlocked and unattended for quite a long period.

Mark mentioned that he would like to see a bandshell resurrected on the Asylum grounds. He plans to have a public meeting on the issue. He notes that while this will be good for New Toronto, there are always opposing sides to every issue. There may be an impact to Long Branch, as expressed by the members at the meeting, since Long Branch currently has their bandshell which is not being properly maintained. The Long Branch members are curious what the impact of a new bandshell will be, especially with such the planned location in such close proximity. Mark also mentioned that Humber College is bringing in a new Arts program, which goes hand-in-hand with the idea of resurrecting the Asylum bandshell.

Mark talked about the Campbell's Soup being one of the only surviving industries from New Toronto's heyday. There was in fact a recent commercial tax hike planned, which Mark unsuccessfully fought with fervor. He is very interested in keeping industry in New Toronto, especially those of historical significance such as Campbell's.

The site that used to accommodate the Continental Can plant on Birmingham Street has been sold. The site is intended for a police college, with the shovel going in the ground in 2005. Mark seemed excited by the plans, hoping that the police presence in the area, so close to the Lakeshore, will be of tremendous value to the community. He feels that there will be many more officers on foot and bicycle, which he hopes will help to clean up and revitalize our community. Mark would also like to see the resurrection of the 21 division of Metro Toronto police (21 division was merged with the current 22 division several years ago), possibly in the form of a 22-division substation on the Lakeshore. He feels that a substation would provide a viable community service, especially when the 22-division station is so far away from the bulk of New Toronto's residents.

Mark has had recent requests for residential development on the brownfield sites on Birmingham Street. He has outright refused any application for residential construction on the Anaconda brownfield site. Again, Mark would like to see booming industry come back to New Toronto, and the brownfield sites along Birmingham and New Toronto Streets have always historically been industrial. Let's keep them that way.

Mark is very keen on the garbage clean up programs. He personally participated in the recent Mayor's clean-up day and would like to see more.

A concern about the vitalization of the Lakeshore commercial businesses was raised. Mark mentioned some kind of façade renovation program where grants are provided to businesses in the amount of \$10K for façade renovations, which must be matched by the business owner to the tune of \$8K. His concern, and that of the audience, is that statistics show that 95% of all the population south of the Lakeshore, do not shop in the local area. What is interesting is that Alf Davies is one of the only local businesses who actually sweeps and shovels and cleans the sidewalk area and street in front of his shop. One member noted that one of the drawbacks of the Lakeshore shopping district is the lack of

supermarkets. No Frills is a streetcar ride to Long Branch, and ValueMart in Mimico just closed. Supermarket shopping would draw shoppers to the area.

The Society had printed copies available of the New Toronto Historical Society website ([www.newtorontohistorical.com](http://www.newtorontohistorical.com)) and Mark took the opportunity to go through the content, making comments on his own memories of growing up in New Toronto.

Notables of Mark's memories:

- Mark was Bob Bingham's paperboy (Bob is the Vice-President of our Society)
- Mark was confirmed, and was an altar boy, at St. Margaret's Anglican Church
- Mark recalls a table, currently housed in the basement of the Mimico Public Library that used to be in New Toronto. The table is said to be crafted by a New Toronto citizen, and Mark would like to see the table brought out into the open for display
- He also talked about the Mayor's chair, currently housed at the LAMP, that he would like to see displayed instead of stored haphazardly off to the side
- Mark remembers the Brown's building clearly, and an audience member recalled that you used to have to go into the basement to secure your bicycle licenses
- Mark also remembered Tommy Greer, mentioned in the website paged on the Brown's building. A member noted that Tommy had passed away a couple years ago at the home that he was living in. Given that there were no funds, he was destined for a pauper's grave, however, family in the States came forward, and money had previously been put away for Tommy's passing away. As such, he was brought to Mimico and a funeral was held with friends and community residents in attendance.

The meeting closed with a show and tell of historical pictures from both the audience and Mark himself. Mark had pictures depicting many of the industry demolitions that occurred, such as Goodyear, Continental Can, Anaconda, and the like. Barbara Bingham had many historical pictures of Seventh Street School and the New Toronto Fire Department, and many others. Wendy Gamble brought a laminated photograph of Cliff Lumsdon when he was 18 years old that was presented to her mother, Lucille Gamble, one of Gus Ryder's swimming champions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laurie Caron,  
Secretary, New Toronto Historical Society  
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