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## Hi Neighbour!

**THIS SATURDAY, May 4, 10:15am, Hendon Park** - Hope to see you at **Let's Move, Willowdale**. Walk, run or bike along the hydro corridor to raise money for NeighbourLink North York and the North York Seniors Centre. If you don't feel like moving as much, you can still join the BBQ and enjoy the entertainment that is scheduled. [Click Here](#) to register for the Move-a-thon and/or BBQ.

### **THIS SUNDAY, May 5 - The Toronto Marathon starts in Willowdale!**

Southbound Yonge from Churchill/Church to 401 will begin at 5:30am and re-open between 9:30-10am. Beecroft will also have rolling closures in the morning. [Click Here](#) for road closure information. Runners are set to start from Yonge/Elmhurst running northbound on Yonge, turning left onto Churchill and then going southbound on Beecroft. [Click Here](#) to see the race route. Early risers can come out and cheer on **runners from over 50 countries!**

**THIS SUNDAY, May 3 at 3pm** - The **Toronto Children's Chorus** is performing at the Meridian Arts Centre. **True Colours: Let Your Light Shine** is sure to be a great show with nearly 300 singers! [Click Here](#) to purchase tickets.

**DO YOU LIVE IN A CONDO? NEXT MONDAY, May 6, 12-2pm**, My team and I are co-hosting a **Condo Leader Luncheon for Property Managers and Condo Board Presidents** (or alternate) with the **Yonge Corridor Condo Association**. We will have city staff joining us to talk about issues of concern to condos in our community. It will be a great opportunity to share knowledge, network and for my team and I to understand better how we can support all the vertical communities in Willowdale. **Please invite your Condo Board President and Property Manager to join us**. Participants will also get to enjoy some free lawn bowling at the Willowdale Lawn Bowling Club! Please ask them to RSVP here: [Click Here](#).

### **Reflection Pond or Activity Space at Mel Lastman Square?**

While we have been waiting for the city to add water to the reflection pond as per their spring schedule, I have noticed kids biking, adults roller skating, and teens skateboarding in the space. It is not easy to find such a large and smooth space available for activities in the spring and summer amidst our sea of condos in the North York Centre area. We inquired of staff to see if such activities could harm the ice skating infrastructure under the "pond." They said it would not and is quite durable.

We want to hear your thoughts! Should we fill the pond with water, which does cost money to maintain and refill after draining the pond for large events like the **Korean Festival** and **Taste of North York**. OR, should we leave it as an activity space and maybe even host a roller skating/blading party? [Click Here](#) to fill out our quick survey!

**WE ARE HIRING:** We are currently hiring **2 Community Outreach and Events Coordinators** for a summer 14-week contract. [Click Here](#) for more information.

**Happy Jewish Heritage Month!** The month of May is an opportunity to recognize the many contributions and achievements of Jewish Canadians in our Willowdale community. We are proud to celebrate the significant impact that the Jewish community has made in shaping our city!

**Happy Asian Heritage Month!** This May, let us celebrate the Asian community in our city. From vibrant cultures to meaningful contributions to delicious food, our Willowdale community thrives thanks to the rich tapestry of Asian heritage woven into our fabric. Let us continue to learn and appreciate our diverse Asian heritage! We also look forward to the **Asian Heritage Month Cultural Festival** coming to **Mel Lastman Square** on **Saturday, May 25!** [Click Here](#) if you are interested in being a vendor. We are grateful to the **Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto** for bringing this event to our neighbourhood!

### **Meridian Arts Centre**

Formerly known as the **Toronto Centre for the Arts**, this facility is a beautiful gem in our neighbourhood. Some may remember large musicals being offered which were very popular. At the time the building was generating a profit and had financial reserves. Unfortunately, the decision was made to carve up the space into smaller performance spaces which led to two consequences:

- The building is no longer generating a profit. This being said, some advocates would say, we should not expect city arts facilities to generate a profit, as we do not ask the library to generate a profit.
- The performance spaces do not have the stage amenities needed to host large theater shows (eg. there aren't large wings available for set changes nor is there the technical requirements to fly in background changes)

I am concerned the programming currently being offered may not be meeting the interests and needs of the community. Further, the high cost of booking the space makes it very hard for community groups to access.

I took a tour of the facility last week with the **President and CEO of TOLive, Clyde Wagner**. TOLive is a city agency which manages and operates the City's three major civic theatres – the **St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Meridian Arts Centre** and **Meridian Hall** (formerly Sony Centre for the Performing Arts). He has offered to work with me and the local arts community to increase accessibility and staff are looking at how programming can be fine tuned at all TOLive sites to better meet programming needs of local communities. We are working on a survey for the community to hear your thoughts on what you would like to see at the Meridian Arts Centre.

### **Transform Yonge**

I know this is a divisive topic. Some in the community can't wait for the neighbourhood to have a complete redesign with larger sidewalks, upgraded streetscape in partnership with the **Yonge North York BIA** and safer passageway for pedestrians and people on bicycles. Others hate the idea of adding bike lanes on Yonge Street at the cost of losing 2 car lanes and street parking. Either way, many are wondering what are the next steps?

We met with the Major Projects Team from Transportation Services. Currently, a consultant has been hired to help socialize the plan while also receiving feedback that could be applied to the design process. We are working with them on ideas of how they can be present in our community and help people understand the nature of the plan as well as contribute to its future. We expect an outreach team to be at several events over the course of the summer with a larger scale event next summer.

I have reiterated to staff that impact on local businesses and accessibility to our main street by residents who do not live within walking distance remains a high priority. I will continue to amplify these concerns at future meetings.

Transform Yonge is slated to begin construction in 2028. That being said, there could be potential delays as they do not want to begin this massive project until the Doris and Beecroft extensions are completed due to impact on traffic. This gives us plenty of time to work on design, find the best compromises and it gives the **Yonge North York BIA** more time to save money towards the public realm improvements that will significantly upgrade our streetscape.

I am also advocating for a refresh of **Mel Lastman Square** which is aging and in need of constant 'state of good repair' fixes. I am hopeful such an endeavour could also be aligned with the timing of construction for Transform Yonge. It would be great to replace the 80s rocket ship fountain that is constantly broken.

### **Tunnel Advocacy Continues**

Last week, I took a walk with the **Executive Director of Corporate Real Estate, Pat Matozzo**, alongside local residents to look at a tunnel that connects a group of condos, along with the Federal building to the **Yonge/Sheppard Centre**. Residents are asking that the tunnel be made accessible for people with wheelchairs, walkers or strollers. Because the tunnel is a city asset, we are required to make it accessible. However, not all parts of the tunnel are owned by the city, including the stairs that lead to the tunnel on the west side of Yonge. Corporate Real Estate will be adding the tunnel to the accessibility construction plans projected to take place over the next 2 years. They will also be reaching out to the building owners that have doors and/or stairs into the tunnel to request they make their entrances accessible. We will continue to follow up on this matter which will undoubtedly take some patience to see to completion.

### **Park Action Coming Soon...**

#### **Caswell Park**

- The procurement call for construction services has closed and the City is in the process of awarding the contract which is anticipated to be issued imminently, after which the contractor will be able to order the equipment and schedule construction.
- With the above in mind, the project remains on schedule for construction to begin in late summer 2024, pending weather and supply chain

availability, and conclude in Fall 2024.

### Pemberton Park

- The City utilized their pre-qualified, unit rate Construction Blanket contract to procure a contractor, and I am happy to advise the project remains within the allotted budget for this project.
- The contractor has placed the order for equipment and has been given a tentative (based on weather and supply chain) installation date of late June, which will allow construction to conclude over the summer months.

### Bishop, Gwendolen, Wedgewood and Debell Park Play Enhancement -

Consultations will begin this year for an upgrade to the parks slated to begin construction next year.

**Willowdale and Silverview Park** - Consultations continues with construction slated to begin next year.

**Holmes Park Phase 2** - Consultation is expected to be completed this spring/summer. We are still waiting for a confirmation on the timeline for construction.

### Coming to Council

#### Canada Day Across the City

In response to a motion I passed a few months ago, the Economic Development and Culture division reported on the distribution of city and federally-funded Canada Day events across the city. **The report confirmed what we already knew. North York is the ONLY borough without fireworks nor ANY city-funded event.** Meanwhile, Toronto/East York can enjoy 2 large fireworks displays and Etobicoke and Scarborough each have one. I will be moving a motion to request equitable investment across the city's four boroughs for Canada Day events for 2025. [Click Here](#) to see the distribution of funding across the 4 boroughs. [Click Here](#) to see all the events that are happening. Willowdale will be getting federally-funded Canada Day programming at Gibson House. The Yonge North York BIA has also just received confirmation of a small amount of federal funding which the city has offered to bolster in the absence of any other city investment in our neighbourhood. I will continue to advocate that we get our fair share of city investment in economic development and culture along with other divisions.

#### Major Streets Study - Gentle Density Across the City

The Planning and Housing Committee will be considering the EHON Major Streets Final Report on May 9, 2024. The [Major Streets Study](#) focuses on permitting gentle density – missing-middle housing – on major streets in low-rise neighbourhoods across Toronto. Major streets are those transportation corridors which support surface transportation, shipping and delivery routes, and provide connectivity across the city. [Click Here](#) to view the **public notice and for information on how you can share your views on the matter**, including **making a deputation**. [Click Here](#) to see impacted areas across the city. **See graphic below for the impacted areas for Willowdale.**

#### A Micromobility Strategy for Toronto

Micromobility is a term for small, low speed, light weight vehicles - including bicycles, cargo bikes / trikes, folding bikes, electric two / three / four-wheeled cycles, electric kick-scooters (e-scooters), e-mopeds, and electric mini-cars. City staff are proposing the city continues to opt out of the province-wide [O. Reg. 389/19: PILOT PROJECT - ELECTRIC KICK-SCOOTERS](#). Mainly, we will be waiting for a report back at the end of the provincial pilot project for low-speed vehicles in 2027. The city will also be to conducting an educational blitz in the summer of 2024, and in the spring and the fall beginning in 2025 to enhance public awareness of key safety issues, i.e. illegal sidewalk riding, wrong-way riding in cycle tracks, illegal e-moped use in cycle tracks, and illegal parking in bike lanes. The challenge with this decision is that e-scooters will continue to be illegal across our city - meanwhile their use continues to grow in popularity. [Click Here](#) to see the proposed policy and to leave comments for the Infrastructure and Environment Committee meeting discussing this tomorrow, May 2.

**Happy Belated Earth Day!** Special Thanks to **Churchill Public School** for helping to clean up the **Edithvale Community Centre** outdoor space. It was much needed and the students did a great job! Our office arranged for this great opportunity for the students to give back!

#### Thank you to all the attendees of the Newtonbrook West Spaghetti Town Hall!

It was so great to see Newtonbrook West neighbours at our Community Spaghetti Dinner & Town Hall this past Friday! What a truly encouraging sight to see, neighbours connecting over a spaghetti meal and games, engaging with City Staff and voicing their concerns and questions to work towards a better neighbourhood. THANK YOU to Emily Crow, Newtonbrook West resident who facilitated the community dinner agenda, and THANK YOU to Zamani Meats - North York (6120 Yonge St), a local Iranian butcher and grocery that sponsored delicious cookies!

During the Town Hall, information was shared about **Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety**, **Yonge North Secondary Plan**, **Community Safety**, and **Community Centres**, with time for Q&A. Thank you to all of our presenters who provided Newtonbrook West residents with relevant information and helpful tips.

A poll was done to gauge ideas of residents for community programs and events in Newtonbrook West. Participants noted that they would like to see more **Seniors Programs**, followed by **Intercultural/cross-cultural programs** and **Arts and Music programs**. For Summer Events in the community, most residents wanted to see a **BBQ**, followed by **Farmer's Market**, and **Concerts/Live Music**. To realize these dreams, we need YOUR help! Let's work together to animate the community with the programs and events YOU want to see. Please join the neighbourhood association group chat: [bit.ly/newtonbrookwestfun](https://bit.ly/newtonbrookwestfun), or reach out to our office if you would like to get involved.

Have a wonderful rest of your week!

Warmest regards,

 Lily Cheng 陳伶俐  
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