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Hi Neighbour!

Thank you to all who braved the cold temperatures to join us at Mel Lastman Square for our [2nd Annual Willowdale Community Skate Party](#). We are grateful to the **Yonge North York BIA** for the DJ who provided some great tunes for us! Also thanks to everyone who supported **NeighbourLink North York** with the purchase of a hot bowl of noodles! Thank you to **MP Ali Ehsassi** for co-hosting with me and providing delicious cookies and brownies. We missed our **MPP Stan Cho** who is very busy with ministerial responsibilities these days.

We survived Budget Week! Since the [proposed budget with a 10.5% increase to property taxes](#) and corresponding divisional notes were released last Wednesday, my team and I have been pouring through these notes in preparation for the past 3 days of budget meetings where we had the opportunity to ask questions one division at a time. We were grateful to have a team of volunteers from our community who joined us in pouring through the notes. While I only get a 5 minute window to ask questions for every division, we will be following up with each department.

Thank you to the almost 92 attendees who came out to our [Willowdale 'City Budget' Town Hall](#). Anthony Ng, the Executive Director of Financial Planning for the city gave a presentation on the budget with comments from our Budget Chief Shelley Carroll. [Click Here](#) to view the Town Hall.

Budget Journey Thus Far:

The City Staff and Budget Chief presented a budget on January 10. Residents have had many opportunities to attend virtual and in-person town halls across the city to learn more and ask questions. This included our own Willowdale Budget Town Hall. This past week the Budget Committee had the opportunity to dive deeper into each division's budget with presentations and the opportunity to ask questions.

The Road Ahead:

Following Budget Committee Meetings across the city where residents can make deputations, the mayor will take in all the feedback and put forward her own budget on February 1. Council will then have the opportunity to put motions forward to make amendments which will be voted on along with the Mayor's Budget on February 14.

Key Issues about City of Toronto Budget

1. New Fiscal Framework is Needed. As I've mentioned in many previous issues of this email newsletter, the main problem for the City of Toronto is the need for a new fiscal framework. A city the size and complexity of Toronto needs revenue tools that grow with our population and economy. [Click Here](#) for some international examples. Without solving this problem, the annual wrestling for money with higher orders of government will continue along with the need to increase property taxes that allow us to build rather than deteriorate our city.

2. Apocalyptic State of Good Repair (SOGR). At the end of most briefing notes for divisional budgets, there was a graph with a red line denoting exponential growth of the State of Good Repair Backlog. Many city assets are reaching a certain age that requires substantial fixes. As a city, we are not allowed to incur a debt on our operating budget. However, the City's SOGR backlog is expected to grow from \$10.6 billion at the end of 2023 to \$22.7 billion in 2033 - even with \$26.0 billion or 52% of planned capital spending over the next 10 years dedicated to SOGR. This is a debt against the city our children will inherit. Added to this is the reduction the city is receiving from development charges due to Bill 23 when the province significantly scaled back development charges while promising to "make us whole." This means fewer dollars to spend on infrastructure to support growth which in turn reduces our ability to allocate funding to SOGR. We all sense a marked deterioration across our city. At this point, we are bailing water.

3. Windrow Clearing. Windrows are the car width opening made by specialized plows after the road has been plowed. This is the only service slated to be cut this year. However, there has been an outcry from residents across the suburbs - especially seniors. Due to the width of the roads in the outer areas of Toronto (including Willowdale), snow plows can end up dumping quite a bit of snow in front of people's driveways - sometimes after they have finished shoveling. The snow can be heavy and ice laden. Forcing all those in need of this support to have to find contractors is not ideal and negatively impacts those who are disabled and seniors. I proposed examining free windrow clearing for seniors and the disabled - similar to Markham, or a fee-for-service similar to our garbage collection. Most suburban councillors are not in favour of this cut.

4. The Police and the City are not singing the same song yet. There remains a \$12.6 million budget gap between what is being proposed by the Toronto Police Service and the city. The police have said that not securing this increase will impact their hiring pipeline which will compromise their ability to deliver adequate and effective policing. With 25% of the force eligible for retirement, a constant flow of new recruits is necessary to build a complement that can acquire the skills to be future supervisors and sergeants. The City argues that this current budget allows for an additional 200 officers.

There appears to be a significant amount of distrust that ironically parallels how many residents feel about the city. The city feels the police should find more efficiencies. Similarly, residents feel the city should find more efficiencies. Further, just as the city points to our unique size and complexity as a cost driving factor - the police say the same thing pointing to:

- the number of protests far exceeding other Canadian cities,
- Embassies located in Toronto,
- international events (eg. FIFA),
- and the larger footprint of organized crime.

As a member of the Toronto Police Board AND City of Toronto Budget Committee, I hope I can be a bridge builder in this process as conversations continue towards the Mayor's budget release.

5. Is there a giant pool of savings that can be found? During the city's budget process, they found \$620 million in savings. [Click Here](#) for details. The city would need to find \$42 million for every percentage decrease we hope to see in the proposed property tax increase. As a city councillor, I am not presented with a line-by-line of every division. At the high level which we are able to provide oversight - it is hard to "trim the fat." I suspect that when you drill down, the savings one might be able to find would be small and incremental, not sweeping big line item cuts. If we hypothetically went through this process, each cut would have to be weighed against the greater good we are trying to achieve which can often reduce future costs. Some of my colleagues who have been on council for decades point to the time when Rob Ford was mayor and looking to "stop the gravy train." They say the mythical gravy train was never found.

This budget restores TTC service to pre-pandemic levels, it increases library hours which serve some of the most vulnerable in our community, and mostly maintains current levels of service across the city. We will see if we are able to wrestle down any of these numbers towards the Mayor's budget.

I believe true cost savings have to be achieved throughout the year and not through the annual budgeting process. It is through examining processes and leveraging technology that savings can be achieved. Based on a previous motion I passed, I will continue to engage the City Manager to ensure the city is on a continuous improvement journey - which I know is also a priority to him. Here is my motion passed on September 6, 2023:

City Council direct the City Manager to examine the City's current and planned future process improvement activities across city divisions using business process review tools such as a lean six sigma lens and report back to the Executive Committee as part of the 2024 budget process including:

a. results to date of continuous improvement actions as part of the 2024 Divisional budget packages;

b. a process for determining which City services/activities could benefit from further continuous improvement; and

c. the City Manager and other relevant staff work with the Service Excellence working group of Councillors to determine how best to publicly report on how we are improving services towards making the City more streamlined, equitable and agile.

I hope to see many of you at the Committee meeting **NEXT TUESDAY** night! May the voices and concerns of our community be heard.

Warmest Regards,

Lily Cheng 陳伶俐
Lily Cheng

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Click On The Links Below or Scroll Down To Learn More About:

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COUNCILLOR UPDATES

WILLOWDALE WINTER WARM UP BBQ WITH SOCK DRIVE

Co-hosted by **Willowdale Lawn Bowling Club** and **Councillor Lily Cheng**. Join us on **February 4th, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm** for some neighbourhood fun! Meet your neighbours, enjoy a hamburger or hot dog (vegan options available) and learn more about the fabulous people and facility at the Willowdale Lawn Bowling Club. Please remember to bring a donation of new, unwrapped socks for those in need. Help Willowdale fill the Sox Box! Children are welcome: There will be one short mat out. There are smaller bowls for children in the bowls room, and they will be brought out so children can give it a try.

[RSVP](#)

LUNAR NEW YEAR - SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE for the **2nd annual Willowdale Celebrates Lunar New Year** at Mel Lastman Square and North York Centre on **Feb 24th**. Indoor activities will be held in **North York Public Library** and **North York Centre Atrium and Food Court** during the day from **1:00-6:00pm** that will feature various cultural performances, demonstrations, arts and crafts, and storytelling in English and Mandarin. More details to be released in the coming weeks.

[RSVP](#)

REPORTING POWER OUTAGES

For residents experiencing power outages, reach out directly to Toronto Hydro at power_quality@torontohydro.com and provide them with your address so that they are able to determine the feeder that your home is serviced from to better address the issue. You can also call **416-542-8000 (press 6)** from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to report the outage.

WINTER BUS STOP UPDATE

As winter approaches, we would like to provide you with an update on TTC's [Severe Winter Weather plan](#).

Fifty-six bus stops are being updated in various locations across the city with new permanent winter weather information signs indicating that the stop may be taken out of service during snow and freezing rain storms. These stops are located in known trouble spots such as hills or areas that make it difficult for a bus to travel during heavy snow and freezing rain. Here is the list of stops that will be affected in our ward:

Route	Stop #	Location
42 Cummer	Stop #1803	Cummer Ave at Bayview Ave
53 Steeles East	Stop #8225	Steeles Ave East at Henderson Ave
353 Steeles East Night Bus	Stop #8225	Steeles Ave East at Henderson Ave

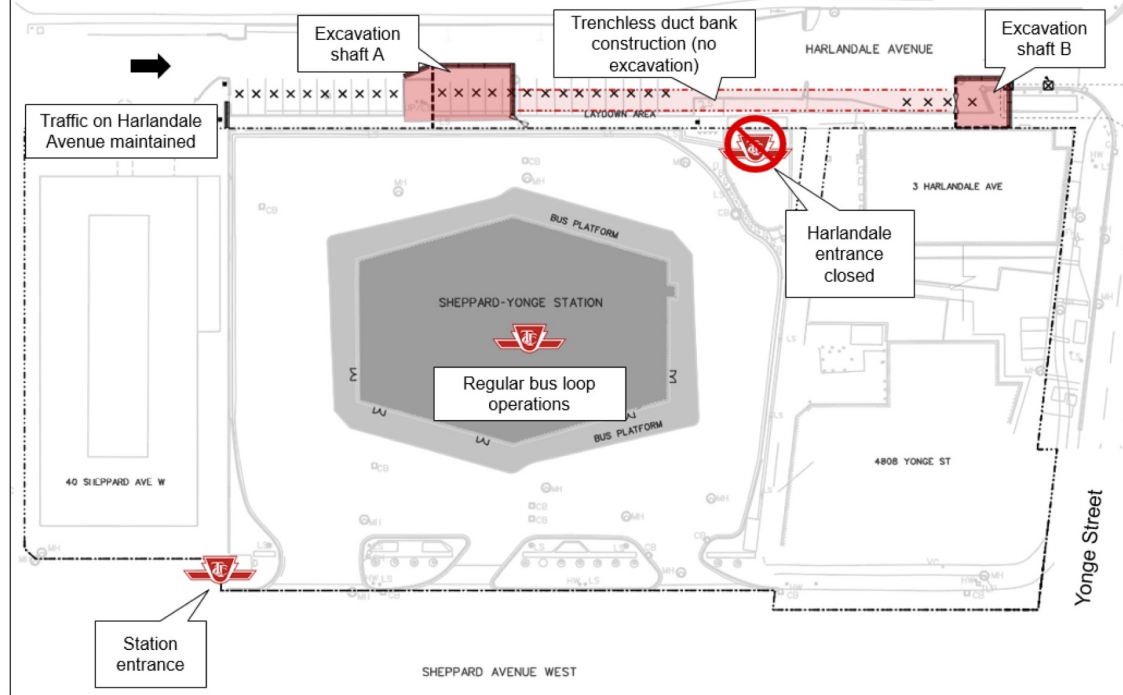
[Learn More](#)

UPDATE ON WARMING CENTRE IN WILLOWDALE - NAME CHANGED TO 12 HOLMES AVE:

The City acknowledges the recent challenges faced by clients due to confusion surrounding the address of our warming center. The amalgamation of the City of Toronto led to some street names being duplicated among the original six municipalities, leading to misunderstandings.

Specifically, the Warming Centre formerly known as 15 Olive Ave encountered issues as another property with the same address existed in downtown Toronto. Despite the City's efforts to discourage visits to the incorrect 15 Olive Ave, individuals consistently arrived at the wrong location, causing stress for both the resident of the downtown address and the individuals seeking assistance.

To address this issue, Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) has initiated the process of assigning a new dedicated address to the warming center: 12 Holmes Ave, North York, ON M2N 4L8. This change, necessitated by the confirmation of two legally assigned municipal addresses for the property, is expected to significantly reduce confusion. TSSS is confident that this adjustment will facilitate better access for vulnerable individuals to the correct address, ensuring consistent access to safe indoor spaces.



HARLANDALE CLOSURE

TTC will be working to improve the infrastructure at Sheppard-Yonge Station this year. Starting as early as January 26, a new duct bank will be constructed underneath Harlandale Avenue along the south curb lane. A duct bank is an underground reinforced concrete or metal container used for laying utility lines such as electrical. In the spring, TTC will also begin work to rehabilitate the pavement of the bus loop, requiring its temporary closure until late 2024. [Click here](#) to know additional details regarding the upcoming infrastructure improvements at Sheppard-Yonge Station.

What to expect during duct bank construction – January 26 to Fall 2024

- To facilitate work safely, the TTC entrance on Harlandale Avenue will be temporarily closed starting as early as January 26. Sheppard-Yonge Station has eight other entrances to serve customers during this closure.
- To ensure a safe work zone and to maintain one-way, eastbound traffic on Harlandale Avenue, existing on-street Green P parking stalls will be temporarily restricted.
- No westbound access to Harlandale Avenue from Yonge Street.
- Work will involve excavating two shafts as seen below. The duct bank between the two shafts will be constructed underground using a trenchless method, requiring no further excavation.
- Work will typically take place daily from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Access to the Green P parking lot on Harlandale Avenue will be unaffected.

TOBOGGAN BAN

Winter is here, snow has come, and along with that, fun times tobogganing outdoors! The City of Toronto wants to ensure everyone's safety, and have designated 27 amazing hills to ensure everyone's safety while enjoying this beloved activity. In **Willowdale**, there are **3 notable parks** where tobogganing has been prohibited because of various safety hazards - and these parks are:

- **Moore Park** (into the 'bowl', as there are soccer goals right at the bottom of the slopes in many spots)
- **Newtonbrook east of Willowdale Ave** (very many trees and branches where the slope becomes a naturalized area)
- **Dempsey Park** (on the little hill with play structures – there are many posts, branches, benches, etc. directly on the slope or at the bottom of the slope)

[Learn More](#)

CITY OF TORONTO UPDATES

VACANT HOME TAX

In Toronto, owners of residential properties must declare their occupancy status annually, even if they live there. The Vacant Home Tax (VHT) applies to properties not serving as the principal residence, occupied by tenants, or eligible for exemptions for six months or more in a calendar year. Access the online portal for declarations now; the deadline is **February 29, 2024**.

[Learn More](#)

AVOID FROZEN PIPES

Frozen pipes can leave you with no water or cause your pipes to burst. Get tips to protect your home at toronto.ca/frozenpipes



TORONTO

311
toronto at your service

AVOID FROZEN PIPES

As winter continues, ensure your pipes are protected from freezing! Did you know that during winter, the City receives regular calls of “no water” due to frozen pipes on residents’ private property? Take steps to protect your pipes from freezing and learn what to do if they freeze by visiting the City’s Prevent or Thaw Frozen Pipes webpage.

[Learn More](#)



PEMBERTON PARKETTE PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

Have your say in the enhancements planned for **Pemberton Parkette Playground**. Share your thoughts on the features and equipment for the upcoming playground improvements. The **survey** period ends on **January 29, 2024**. This initiative is part of the city's ongoing efforts to enhance playgrounds city-wide, ensuring they remain safe and accessible for years of enjoyable playtime.

[Take the Survey!](#)

COMMUNITY UPDATES



EDITHVALE RINK - CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS! Edithvale Ice Rink needs your help! With cold weather approaching, the team has started working on creating the rink. They are an all-volunteer-driven group that builds and maintains the rink for the community's benefit. Duties include clearing snow and flooding the ice, and they are time-flexible. This is a great way to meet your neighbours, enjoy some exercise, and breathe in some fresh air! For students, it's a good way to earn volunteer hours. Reach out to **Edward** at edithvalerink@gmail.com if you'd like to join the team.

Latest update: Edithvale community rink is **OPEN FOR SKATING** !

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Are you passionate about making a difference in the lives of seniors and individuals with disabilities? **Meals on Wheels and More** invites you to become a vital part of their compassionate team in the Willowdale area, North York. MOWAM offers hot meals (Western and Chinese), frozen meals, boxes with fruits and vegetables as well as milk to seniors and people with disabilities in Willowdale area in North York.

Be a part of something extraordinary—where every meal delivered is a moment of connection, care, and community. Contact **Elena Koroleva** at [416-225-6041](tel:416-225-6041) or ekoroleva@mowam.ca to start your journey of impact and kindness today. Together, let's deliver more than meals; let's deliver hope and warmth to those who need it most!

[Learn More](#)

Come experience the magic of **Enchanted Lights at Mel Lastman Square** from **February 10 to March 10, 2024!** This special winter event lights up the square with diverse cultures, featuring beautiful displays, fun entertainment, and tasty food. Walk through the bright paths, enjoy delicious treats, and join in the celebration of togetherness. Enchanted Lights is not just a regular event – it's a way to celebrate winter's magic and the different cultures that make our community special. Save the date and be part of this unique experience that brings people together to enjoy the beauty of lights, culture, and diversity.

- **Mel Lastman Square**
- **February 10 to March 10, 2024**
- **Open daily from 5pm to 10pm**
- **Free Admission**

[Learn More](#)



'The Legend of Huli' (狐狸的传说) is coming to the Meridian Arts Centre on **January 20 and 21!** Willowdaler and producer Nina Zaslavsky and Artistic Director Roman Smirnov presents a mythical story of the east-asian celestial fox portrayed by world class performers from China and Ukraine. Experience a fusion of contemporary dance, light show and music ranging from baroque to flamenco, jazz, world and modern classics.

This amazing multicultural show is a one-of-a-kind fusion of ancient legends and contemporary dance, ranging from baroque to flamenco, jazz, world music, and modern classics. It features both original and blended arrangements. Brought to you by incredible artists, musicians and producers, immigrants from Ukraine, Russia, Israel and China. This multicultural collaboration is a true representation of Canada. Zhenya Kobylansk, from Odessa, Ukraine, is a renowned Ukrainian-Mexican cellist who has earned international recognition for her talent and skill.

Let's support our neighbour, Nina Zaslavsky!

[Get Tickets](#)

TD Park People Grants



Building Vital Connections Between People & Parks

APPLY BY FEBRUARY 27

parkpeople.ca/opportunity/td-park-people-grants

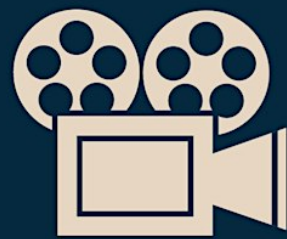


TD PARK PEOPLE GRANTS PROGRAM

TD Park People Grants Program launched on January 10th, and the application deadline is **Tuesday, February 27, 2024!**

This year, the \$2,000 grants will support 70 groups hosting park events in 21 urban areas across Canada ([see eligible cities here](#)). Successful applicants will use the grant to host two events supporting the ongoing care and protection of green spaces through environmental education, sustainability and stewardship initiatives.

[Learn More](#)



MUD COVERED CITY VIEWING

VENICE IFF 1963 WINNER

Discover an Evening of Art and Cinema with WCRA Arts Collective! You are invited to a special screening of the Venice IFF short film winner, "**Mud Covered City**" This cinematic gem is a testament to **Václav Táborský's** directorial skills in crafting short satirical documentaries. Join on either January 24th or 27th, from 7-9 pm at the iconic John Mckenzie House for an unforgettable experience.

Secure Your Spot:

- RSVP for January 24th: [CLICK HERE](#)
- RSVP for January 27th: [CLICK HERE](#)

Immerse yourself in the magic of cinema and become part of the WCRA Arts Collective's mission to foster and celebrate the arts in Willowdale. An enchanting evening awaits you!



Robbie Burns Tea

Wednesday, January 24th

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm In the Café

Let's celebrate the life of the famed poet, Robert Burns, and all things Scottish. We'll drink tea and nibble on scones and sweets.

\$10 Member, \$12 Non-Member Please RSVP by Wednesday, January 17th

Call the Programs Office at 416 733.4111

Rayoak Place
RETIREMENT LIVING

Food provided by



Let's come together to celebrate the life of the renowned poet, Robert Burns, and immerse ourselves in all things Scottish! You're cordially invited to join for a delightful gathering at the **North York Seniors Centre's Robbie Burns Tea**.

Date: January 24th

Time: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Indulge in a cozy afternoon filled with piping hot tea, delectable treats, and the joy of shared moments. To ensure your spot, please **RSVP** by calling the Programs Office at **416-733-4111**.

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