

Councillor Sumner Puts Out Fire At Heated Meeting On Proposed Centennial Park Plan

Councillor Allan Sumner, who has long advocated more fire protection in the Thornhill end of Markham Township, played the role of fireman himself last week at a heated meeting of council.

The Ward 1 councillor was called to put out the fire when Reeve Charles Hooper closed off discussion of the finance committee's report on the proposed 100-acre park Centennial project — which had been the subject of a deputation of ratepayers in the area of the park — and the meeting threatened to get out of hand.

More than 70 ratepayers had jammed the council chambers to continue their protest against the proposed project which they claimed cost too much and was unnecessary to an essentially rural district.

The ratepayers, who had come to the meeting at the invitation of council, ostensibly to discuss the report of the finance committee, protested strenuously when, after the report had been received by council, they were told by the reeve that there would be no discussion on it.

While the chambers erupted into an angry roar and the reeve defended his position on the grounds of "parliamentary procedure," Deputy-reeve Stewart Rumble and Councillor Sumner put their heads together and came up with a motion that the finance committee report be left open for discussion.

Council then moved into committee of the whole with Councillor Sumner taking over the reeve's spot as chairman.

Prior to Councillor Sumner moving into the chair, the meeting had moved along at an increasing rumble as the ratepayers and council took turns in trying to keep the floor.

While the residents, led by solicitor Senator Harry A. Willis of Toronto, repeated their arguments of previous weeks as to cost, location and the need for a park, Reeve Hooper challenged the visitors to speak to a letter that had been mailed to residents of the township, purporting to be an accurate account of the project and all it involved.

Unsigned, except for the words, "Property Owners Advisory Council," the well-laid-out letter was labelled as "75 per cent propaganda" by the reeve, who then asked the writer or writers to come forth so they could be questioned on it.

It was probably the only time during the evening that the meeting was completely quiet as the reeve's challenge was left hanging in the air.

Stephen Roman, a member of the delegation, then asked what parts of the letter were in question and was informed by Mr. Hooper that he didn't think council should discuss the matter when there had been no volunteer as to its authorship.

Councillor Sumner said he wondered who the property advisory committee was and why no one had had "enough nerve" to sign it.

Ticking off several points made by the letter, Councillor Sumner said: "I can see whoever suggested a library (as a Centennial project) needs one."

Lake Ontario shores were lined with pools, Mr. Sumner said in answer to the letter's criticism of having a pond site near water; overnight camping: "Where the blazes did that come from?"

"I think anybody who puts any faith in this two-bit propaganda should take another look," he said.

Said Mr. Rumble: "I don't think it's worth discussing unsigned."

Mr. Sumner then moved that the letter be tabled. This brought up the controversial finance report, which outlined the layout of the proposed park and its suggested financing.

In reading the report, Mr. Sumner said the work described would be considered the "basic requirement for the opening date and the project as a whole should be considered a continuing scheme to be improved and enlarged in coming years."

The park, which is to be located at the Devil's Corner, near 17th Avenue, would have a winter sports area, with space for skiing, sleighing, and tobogganing, as well as an area for "passive types of recreation" in the spring, summer and fall.

A pond, covering nine acres, would allow skating in the winter, while its fringes would allow a picnic area in the summer. There would also be a sports area and parking accommodation.

Mr. Sumner said the Metropolitan Official Plan gave a projected population for the township of 50,000 by 1980 in the urban areas only, plus 7,600 in the rural areas, with an estimated total urban capacity of 84,000.

Following are the estimated costs: purchase price of property, \$120,000; engineering and supervision, \$500; preliminary dredging and grading, \$15,000; service roads and parking areas, \$2,500; new trees, \$1,000; miscellaneous labor, \$5,000; Centennial marker, \$1,000. Total: \$145,000.

Mr. Sumner said that grants, the purchase price of the land would be \$85,000, to be debentured over five years.

Tree removal and other labor would be 75 per cent eligible under the winter works program "with no strings attached."

The park and the report were supported by Mr. Rumble and Councillor Cleary Palmer. — "Where else would you put a park but in a rural area . . . you can't tear down a city to do it," but not supported by Councillor Charles Hoover, a member of the finance committee.

Mr. Hoover, who received a prolonged round of applause for his stand, referred to the recommendations of the interim report of the Select Committee of the Legislature which stated that such projects as are provided to persons — parks, education, administration — should be financed by persons "who reap the benefit."

"Would you put libraries in the same category as parks?", asked Mr. Sumner. Mr. Hoover said he wouldn't but agreed they could be when it was pointed out they were under the same section.

A motion to receive the report and discuss it in committee was adopted unanimously, thus provoking the eruption between the reeve and the deputation.

Said Mr. Roman: "I think the people should be able to talk on this."

"Would you mind sitting down?" asked the reeve.

"Of course I mind," said Mr. Roman.

Mr. Hooper said the delegation had been given the chance to speak earlier and hadn't, promptly precipitating a chorus of hoots and jeers among the spectators.

Senator Willis requested the clerk to read the minutes of the previous meeting, in which Mr. Sumner said the report would be open to discussion when it was ready.

Said Mr. Hooper: "You had your chance . . . There's a procedure we have to follow, whether it's right or wrong. Any discussion should have been before."

After the motion to hear the report, Mr. Sumner answered questions from the floor:

Q - Does the Centennial Commission in Ottawa approve of it?
A - They have a representative in Toronto who handles it. They need a copy of the plans to finalize it.

Q - Would they have the feeling of township residents?
A - They would probably leave it to the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Q - Has the parks committee had anything to do with it?
A - Yes, in 1963 they recommended it.

Q - Has a Centennial committee ever been formed? How did it start (the project) without forming one?
A - The Centennial committee was formed by the Department of Tourism . . . it does not make the projects.

Q - Don't you think you should have formed a committee to plan one.
A - If you ask 10 different people, you get 10 different answers.

Mr. Sumner went on to Markham Township Deputy-reeve Stewart Rumble gained a dubious victory at this hectic council meeting.

During the exchanges between council and the ratepayers, who packed the chambers to protest the township's Centennial project, Mr. Rumble asked one of the deputation to repeat some charges he had made against the deputy at an earlier meeting.

"I don't care to say anything to you," said the man.

"You called me a crook," said Mr. Rumble. "I did not."

"You most certainly did."

"You're a liar," said the man, bringing the argument to a quick finish.

say that people had recommended such projects as a Centennial sewage plant, Centennial sidewalk and others. The park project had been well publicized for two years, which should have been enough warning.

As for a library, where would it be located? The Centennial project stipulates one building only, Mr. Sumner said.

Fred McLenaghan, an occasional spokesman for the group, repeated his argument of other meetings that council should accede more to

the people's wishes. "You'll have a very excellent opportunity to prove your point next November," said Mr. Rumble.

A remark by Mr. Sumner that the protest was a "local affair" and that he hadn't received one objection from his ward, drew a laugh when a member of the delegation jumped up immediately following and said he was from the same ward and he objected.

"Well, that's the first one," said Mr. Sumner. "Why don't you build the

park in Thornhill?" asked another questioner. "I'd like nothing better," said Mr. Sumner.

He said, also, that so far as he could answer, the park wouldn't accommodate overnight campers.

Howard Cosburn, a former township councillor, said some residents taxes were up as much as \$500 this year. "I don't think they can stand it much longer," said Mr. Cosburn.

thought this one would be the most acceptable. Another spokesman, Anthony Roman, suggested the township build three swimming pools for the money. He said the Richmond Hill Centennial pool had only cost \$50,000.

Mr. Sumner said he didn't know what it had cost.

(The Richmond Hill pool cost between \$125,000 and \$130,000, with \$36,000 covered by Centennial grants, \$44,000 by public subscription and most of the balance covered by the town.)



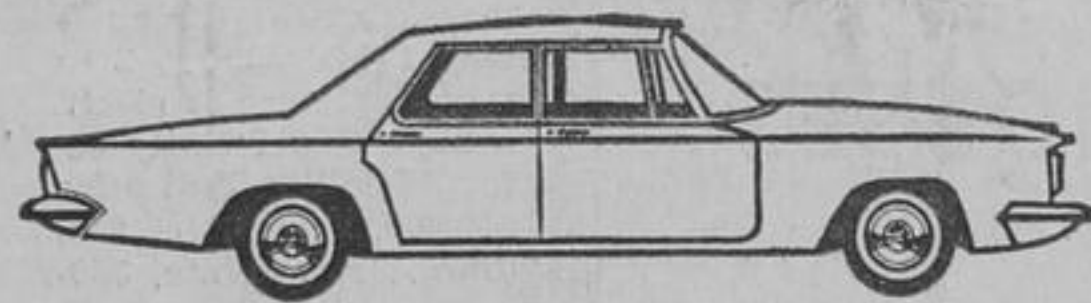
(Photo by Stuart's Studio)

Honor Parish Priest

In celebration of the silver anniversary of his ordination into the priesthood, Father Reinhard Burchardt was honored at a banquet given by the congregation of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, King City, on June 27.

Mrs. Eric Boon is shown above presenting a gift and purse to Father Reinhard on behalf of the parish. Father Arnold Hartman, Prior of the Augustinian Fathers at Mary Lake was the dinner speaker. Father Reinhard has recently returned from a vacation in Europe.

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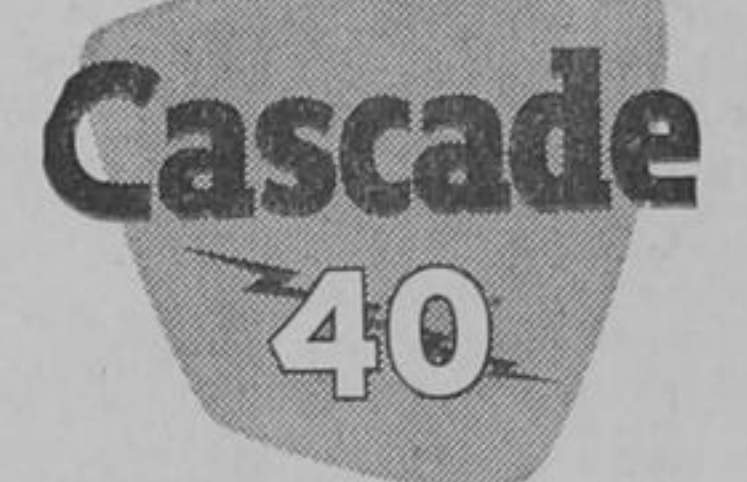
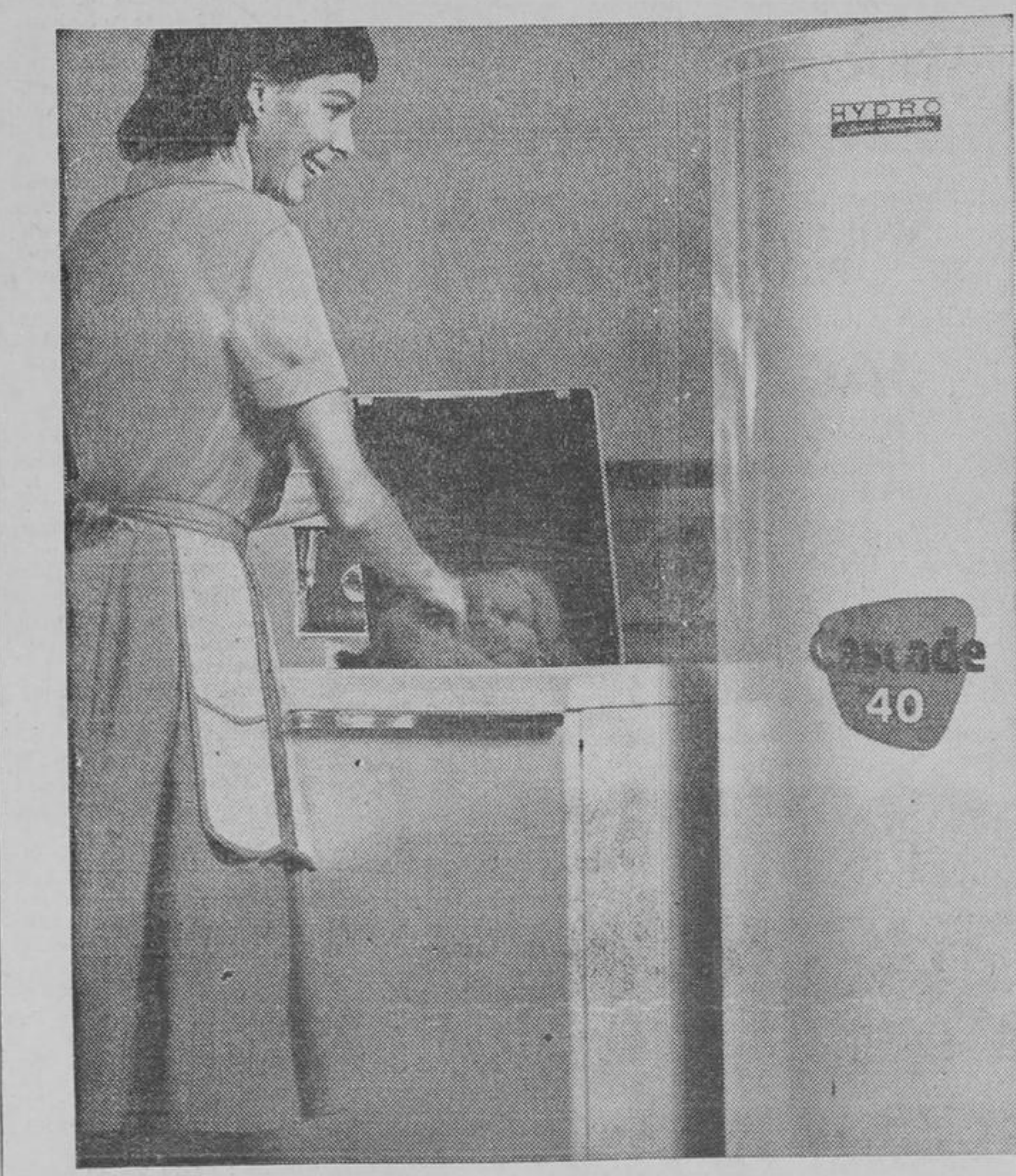
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