

Mayor Sees Health, Social Services Pressing



(Photo by Susan Samila)

During Mayor William Lazenby's four years as chief magistrate of the Town of Richmond Hill, his family has been growing, perhaps like the municipality. Here the

BY HAL BLAINE

The most difficult and pressing municipal matter being faced in Richmond Hill at this time is health and social services, according to Mayor William Lazenby. The mayor was interviewed the other day on local affairs, it being just about the middle of the present town council's two-year term of office.

The mayor says the town now has well established clerk's, treasurer's and works sections. The community planning office has been organized. It is now the time of the soft services, he says, predicting a new health and social services developments. Parks and recreation services are advancing rapidly with major new projects at Langstaff, Richvale, central Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges.

NEW FAIRGROUNDS
Big item in this regard is the new fairgrounds at 18th Avenue and Leslie Street where he hopes the Spring Fair could even be held this May.

Mayor Lazenby sees some major changes ahead in the community planning blueprints due to housing and development pressures and due to provincial changes in the Toronto Centred Region Plan.

It was because of the great need to give attention to health and social services that the mayor continued in this field as his prime involvement at York Region Council. This being his second two-year term on region council also, he last year rose to the health and social services committee chairmanship.

"We've got to expand on day care, school dental care. Amenities or services of this kind have to be built up... such facilities as the family life centre and things of this nature, centres for seniors and youth, recreation," says Mayor Lazenby.

"We need better arrangements to cope with the shorter work week... more swimming pools, tennis courts. We need to meet the needs of social groups, age groups, common interest sections of the population like young mothers. We need to find programs like the YWCA promotes to fill the void in various levels of life. We've got to push for dental services, education on birth control.

IGNORANCE STILL
"We think we live in the age of sophistication. But there's still a lot of ignorance within the population. The answer is to keep youngsters in school longer, give them better exposure to health measures through education. If you don't get on it from the source it becomes more expensive later on. We must have the right social services, make them available and publicize them.

Lazenby says the "big crunch" in the immediate future in Richmond Hill is going to be the stress on social amenities, seeing they are available to people and getting them working earlier within the population. In time this function of the town administration will be a department like the others, he predicts.

The town is past the physical amenity stage and is moving beyond that. Work on social services is like a road. If the work is done well enough in the early life of the citizens, emergency repair costs are cut drastically.

by says. The housing situation is critical and the most pressing thing. The centre of urbanism is moving north in this part of Ontario. In the past it has spread along the Lake Ontario shore. Now the apex of the development triangle is tending to move north through Richmond Hill since this is the direction in which the Toronto subway system can follow it.

"In the future I could see Richmond Hill as the centre of a megalopolis, maybe not in my lifetime and not of the Manhattan type, rather as the centre of "golden horseshoe" type development 20 miles on either side with Lake Simcoe the boundary on the north side.

"Some people say we should have development controlled at five or six percent a year. But it can't be that. It has to be staged development. We have to take into account the housing crisis pressure. GO train terminals become focal points for development. With the start of GO trains two years from now there will be explosive pressure for development in this area. There has to be government assistance to keep lands for parks and agriculture, through the ministry of agriculture or somehow.

"Because of the provincial government interest in, and the pressure on, housing, I expect we're going to see a complete change of attitude to the TCR (Toronto-Centred Region) Plan. It isn't now practical or economic.

"By the year 2000 we're going to need another master plan for the areas further north and around us," says the mayor.

The drastic changes in the TCR Plan will require changes in the population allocations, not for the present developed area of Richmond Hill, but for the area around it.

In regard to the big plan for a sewer trunk line down through Pickering to Lake Ontario, there will probably be a slowing off on that major service due to the cut-back on plans for the international airport and satellite town to the east of here.

UPSTREAM SEWAGE PLANTS
Mayor Lazenby feels it's significant that Aurora and Newmarket have been given the go-ahead to expand up-

stream sewage treatment facilities. This means a major residential expansion is going ahead in those towns to provide the population to pay for extension of the sewage plants.

Considering what has happened in Aurora and Newmarket, there will probably also be interim measures here for sewer and water facilities to assist Richmond Hill growth. This will be in the form of either upstream plants, connections to Metro, or a combination of both.

One provincial government department has wanted to phase out upstream sewage treatment plants, but has been defeated in this in our York Region's northern municipalities. So there is probably going to have to be a compromise here in southern York Region.

FARMS, RECREATION
"We can learn from Europe to combine agricultural, residential and recreation facilities together in each community. But that is certainly going to require provincial assistance. We certainly have prime agricultural land around here. I would hate to see it all disappear. It is a prime amenity of Richmond Hill," said Mayor Lazenby.

Turning to the Oak Ridges-Lake Wilcox area, the mayor said the important situation there revolves around the question of services.

"These are going to be late in coming, but they've got to happen. These residents have to be given water and sewer services. If the province can subsidize that in some way, we can alleviate a critical situation there, although we don't want to expand the developed area. We must keep as close as possible to the TCR Plan concept, yet still

provide the facilities that are going to be needed there," he said, emphasizing again, however, that this will be some time in the future.

Returning to the subject of housing, Lazenby said he expects to see more programs from the province to assist housing.

KINDS OF HOUSING
"We're going to see increased pushes in assistance for senior citizen and subsidized housing. Units are going to be much more freely available to seniors in order to free up units for larger families.

In the field of recreation there is going to have to be more and more consideration given to the elderly, in order to make them more comfortable. Such things as York Manor, meals on wheels, housing and clubs for seniors must be part of a complete housing policy for the town.

Back on the question of parks and recreation, Mayor Lazenby said expropriation proceeding are now in the final stage for the several acres on the Prokopetz property which is to be added to Crosby Park. This will allow completion of plans for this important community centre.

The next thing is Ozark Park in Oak Ridges where the new arena now stands. This facility is to be expanded to include baseball diamonds.

LANGSTAFF PARK
Also the town has finally acquired clear title to park land adjacent to Langstaff Secondary School. This land can now be developed for community use.

The next thing in that vicinity southern part of town is the BAIF park and recreation plan in Richvale. Then

up with other town-owned properties there for water sports and recreation.

The newly-acquired 133-acre fairgrounds and works yard site have existing home and barn buildings. It is possible the Spring Fair may be held there this year.

"I would like to see it. With proper negotiations between the town and fair board, I can see it there this year," he said.

With proper management of that whole piece of property we're going to have a natural recreation area in connection with the fair facilities. The sooner the fair is established there, the sooner we will have recreation development there. In the age of the motorcar, the distance from the town centre isn't so important," said Mayor Lazenby.

FAIR SITE PROBLEMS
The mayor said the fair at the present site involves some major problems. There is noise and irritation to nearby residents. Parking is limited and causes serious congestion on local streets. There are very restrictive limitations on the amount of space for entertainment and exhibits.

Another problem is the destruction of the turf by the horse trials, making the Town Park grounds unsuitable for other recreation uses.

Of the new fair site he said, "We've got it this quickly. We have adequate area. We've got adequate area for parking and can have larger entertainment areas. I'm sure there can be some sort of temporary housing for exhibits. I hope some land can be prepared well enough for horse trials," said Mayor Lazenby in the mid-term interview.

AURORA: Council has agreed to consider a resolution to ban Sunday opening of stores.

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