

A jail at the jail farm? It's possible

RICHMOND HILL — Regional Councillor Lois Hancey has a novel idea about what might eventually go on the Langstaff jail farm site — a jail.

Not that she wants one there, by any means, but she believes it's a possible consequence of town council's decision to turn over planning control of the property to the province.

(Council has requested the site be included in the provincial government's Parkway Belt West. This would keep the site primarily as open space but also allow for recreational and "institutional" uses.)

"I am concerned about the policy on the jail farm," Mrs. Hancey said. "The policy is to turn over to the province the

authority to plan and develop the bulk of the property.

"I believe that the new federal prison proposed for Uxbridge will likely be voted down by residents in their plebiscite — and what more logical place for it to go than the jail farm property."

Mrs. Hancey said this is not yet

anyone's proposal for the property, but she cites it as "a possibility of what might happen if the provincial government decided it was a good place for a jail."

"We shouldn't be giving away planning control of any land anywhere in Richmond Hill."

It would be "marvellous", she said,

to keep the 600-acre site as open space and parkland, "but this isn't very realistic." Already planned for the area are commuter railway service, a new highway and a railway corridor.

Mrs. Hancey believes there should be innovative planning for development of the property trying to achieve "the best of all worlds" — parkland, industrial or office use and possibly some housing in the eastern part.

The main point, she emphasized, is that "we on council were elected to control planning here, not to give it away."

Other candidates for Richmond Hill's two regional council seats, Eric George and Lou Wainwright, also have some ideas about the jail farm.

George first of all would like to see the southern edge of the property used for the hydro corridor that is now planned for the south side of Highway 7.

As it stands, the houses of several Langstaff residents are going to be wiped out to make room for the utility towers.

"I favor developing the rest of the jail farm as a park, similar to the conservation areas," George said.

This would include picnicking spots, trails and possibly a man-made swimming and fishing pond.

George said this kind of development could be done for relatively little money "and would have lasting benefits for Toronto and York Region residents."

Lou Wainwright said he would be "desirous of keeping the property as a greenbelt area if we can afford it" but he's not sure that is the case.

It might be necessary, he said, to try for some development that would provide increased assessment for the town. And perhaps some planned development of residential homes is needed, he added.

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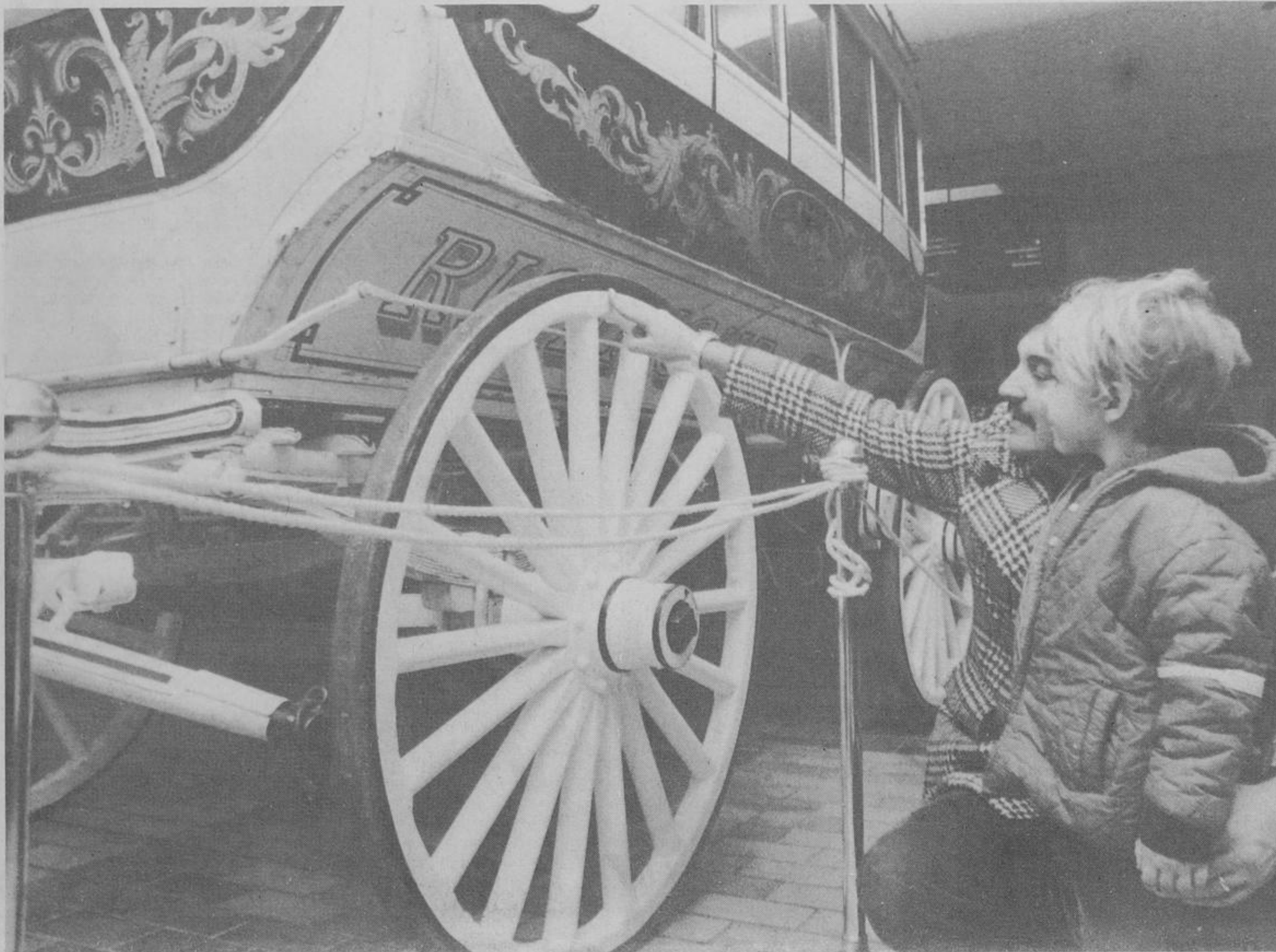
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It's the real thing

If you were in Richmond Hill a century ago and wanted to go down to the city, this is how you did it — by stagecoach. And this one's the real thing, a well preserved vehicle on loan to the town from the National Museum in Ottawa. It's been on display at Hillcrest Mall, one of two

special exhibits highlighting the newest change in Yonge Street transit service. GO Transit system took over from TTC this week. Viewing the coach are Grant Reynar and son Stephen, 4, of Richmond Hill.

Monday's the day

RICHMOND HILL — It's anybody's guess how many voters will go to the polls Monday, but if the Saturday advance poll is any indication the turnout may be down somewhat from the 1974 election.

There were 292 voters here Saturday, down 20 from the advance poll total of two years ago. That represents 1.2 per cent of the 23,643 residents eligible to vote this year.

In the previous election, there were 22,511 eligible voters, and an unusually high turnout of 42 per cent.

Of this year's total, 20,817 are eligible to vote for the public school board candidates and 2,826 for the separate school board.

Town officials this week invited the voters to come to town hall on election night. The returns will be projected on a screen in Screen Room B, and the screen will be automatically updated as the results come in.

Citizens interested in the election outcome are welcome to go to the town offices, but they are asked not to phone in with requests for information. Coffee will be served free of charge.

Railway fence dangers cited

THORNHILL — The CN Railway tracks through Richmond Hill and Thornhill are not properly fenced to keep children away, according to North Thornhill Community Association.

Gary Taylor, president of the group has also called on CN to destroy noxious

weeds and generally clean up the property along the tracks.

Taylor led a walk Saturday along the 1½ miles of track between Highway 7 and Royal Orchard Boulevard. Several area residents and Markham municipal election candidates participated, including Mayor Tony Roman and his opponent, Regional Councillor Bob Adams.

Taylor said his association found that the fences, which were in poor condition a week ago, had been repaired or replaced by the Saturday walk.

"Maybe it was coincidence," he said, "but that work by CN came after our complaints and only when they knew it was going to be inspected by people and the press this weekend."

The new open-wire fencing still is not an adequate barrier for keeping children away from the tracks, Taylor said.

He also said weeds have been allowed to grow out of control on the railway property in North Thornhill.

"If CN can't meet weed control standards, the town may have to do something about it and charge the cost to CN."

The walkers noted some places where residents had thrown garbage on the railway right-of-way or had allowed material on their own property to spill over onto the railway land. But these cases are not the major problem, Taylor said.

He said the association plans to meet with CN officials to discuss details of a major clean-up.

Dave and Gord: The summing up

RICHMOND HILL — What's it all about?

In their last chance at the papers before Monday's vote, mayoralty candidates David Schiller and Gordon Rowe were pounding the typewriters this week to sum up the issues as they see them.

First, excerpts from a Schiller press release:

Schiller said his first term as mayor was a transitional period — a time for revamping or discarding certain unsatisfactory old policies and initiating and developing new ones.

Now, he said, the town is ready to move into a new phase of its evolution, but it will manage to do so only with an administration that understands and endorses the new measures and has the capability and foresight to carry them out.

Given the right leadership, the town should see significant new developments in industrial expansion, affordable housing, local and commuter transportation, and wider use of parklands within the town, the mayor said.

Industrial expansion will focus mainly on an 800-acre parcel of land around Highway 7 and the Don Valley Parkway extension (designated as Highway 404).

"We have already lined up sewerage capacity to serve industries on 200 of those acres, and several companies have already shown interest in locating industries there."

With such prospects in view, his administration has already accelerated the industrial portion of the Official Plan, so as to deal effectively with the problems that inevitably arise with any new development of this sort.

Affordable housing stands high on his



Schiller

Rowe

list of immediate objectives in 1977-78, the mayor said.

"I am far from satisfied with our progress in new housing."

"It's true that enough zoning has been done and subdivision plans registered to create 3710 additional housing units, but I'm concerned about getting the right balance between different kinds of housing — and the right rate of population growth. I believe our town should grow no faster than 4 or 4½ per cent per year — that's about what we can comfortably absorb in new residents."

"And if we are going to get as many of the low-cost housing units we need, including more rental apartments, we may have to get tougher with the developers."

Transportation should undergo a particularly dramatic evolution in the next two years, Mayor Schiller said.

"Until now, the emphasis has focused, quite properly, on the needs of commuters who live in Richmond Hill and work in Toronto."

He pointed out that commuter bus services have been integrated and improved, at considerable savings to local taxpayers: Yonge Street is soon to be reconstructed for better handling of traffic between Major Mackenzie Drive and Highway 7; and the long-awaited GO Train system is now under construction.

"We don't take credit for all these, of course, but they could not be achieved without the town's active cooperation."

Now, he said, the time has come to concentrate on the needs of the town as a place to work as well as to live — to reduce the overall proportion of people who make the town their bedroom community while working elsewhere.

This will involve such measures as the continued monitoring of the local bus system, to make sure it is meeting local travelers' real needs, and certain aspects of long-range planning conducive to the creation of local job opportunities.

New projects (such as developing parks and trails) should be possible even with the present need for restraints in public spending, the mayor added.

"We're under tremendous pressure from the province to keep the lid on our expenditures — and I agree with that policy in principle — but I am confident that everything that needs to be done in Richmond Hill in the next two years can be done, as long as there is sound financial management, efficient administration and far-sighted decision-making on the part of council."

Following is a statement from Gordon Rowe:

The last three weeks I can see a ray of hope as citizens and businessmen are showing a new awareness, a new concern, about the future of Richmond Hill and are rallying behind me because I represent a breath of fresh air as compared to worn out phraseology and philosophy that in two years has made no significant impact.

We are bogged down in the planning processes. People are venting their frustrations on the elected officials and rightly so. Good intentioned people are becoming bitter. I hope when I am mayor to cut a swath through this obstacle course of bureaucratic procedure to bring about some common sense and respectability to the system.

The jail farm is a good point. The provincial Parkway Belt planning has been given away to the provincial authorities whereas it should have been retained under control of Richmond Hill.

I would like to form a new voluntary committee, "The mayor's committee for industrial and commercial development," consisting of one member of the historical society, an

architect, a lawyer, and several members of the chamber of commerce. I am sure such a committee reporting to the mayor and council could assist in making recommendations of renovation or reconstruction of the downtown core as well as industrial and commercial acquisitions.

A new committee, "the mayor's civic involvement committee," would be composed of one citizen from each ward, hopefully to monitor in an unbiased fashion the workings of the council and to meet and present reports in the same manner as other committees.

The most important concern the people have is their rapidly escalating taxes averaging 30 per cent over the past two years. A more businesslike approach should be taken. With a practically static population you cannot continue increasing the town's expenditures at such a rate without placing an unbearable load on its citizens.

This town must never become a wealthy community in which it is only the taxes that pay the staggering tax loads. I will be the first to admit it would be nice to isolate ourselves and remain in a state of "growth stagnation" but ask yourself, "Can I afford it" with the arming tax increases. A few more years, if this inept leadership is allowed to continue, none of us will be able to afford to live in Richmond Hill.

When elected I intend to vigorously promote industrial development to generate additional income and afford some measure of relief to the homeowning, as well as create job opportunities for our Richmond Hill people.

When I take office I intend to devote full time to the position of mayor and my 11 years' political experience, which includes six years' regional experience, will serve the municipality of Richmond Hill in good stead.



Halts the assault

Richmond Hill Rams scored four goals to down Ajax here last week — but this wasn't one of them. Goalie Mike Nash has his glove in the right spot to halt the assault from Rams Rob West (18) and

Danny Jones (15). Rams won 4-3 and went on to another victory against Toronto Nats on the weekend. See Sports Page, B-1.

Inside The Liberal

Letters galore

Is letter-writing back in vogue, or is it just that this is the final week before the civic election? No doubt the latter, but all the same there's a veritable smorgasbord of letters-to-the-editor this week. Pages A4, A6, D6-7.

For a different kind of fighting, to provide some election relief, there's a feature on a local boxing club. Page C-1.

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