

# Toboggan hill returning: mayor

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The toboggan hill is coming back to Thicketwood Park, according to Mayor Justin Altmann.

"It is the one thing that should have never been removed from the park," Altmann told The Sun-Tribune.

The idea came about after Altmann recently went for dinner on Main Street, then grabbed an ice cream and went for a walk through Memorial Park.

He spoke with adults and children about what they liked and didn't like in the park, with the overwhelming sentiment being the toboggan hill has to come back.

Altmann then went to Facebook with this: "How many people would like to see the toboggan hill returned to Memorial Park?"

Within 48 hours, the post had more than 5,000 hits and it now sits at over 8,000, according to Altmann, who added, all of the feedback has been positive.

"Yes and I don't even have kids. Memorial Park used to be filled with people in all seasons. Now it is empty green space with a road through it. Bring the fun and people back to the park," wrote Lynn Kahrkling

"Yes. Everything has been taken out of Memorial Park, our neighbourhood park. By the time anything gets added, my kids will be in university," wrote Krista Beatty.

Altmann said he has already spoken with the people from Tiny Seedlings, a not-for-profit community program for children operated by United Soils, who have confirmed they will donate material and labour to reconstruct the hill.

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville staff will take care of seeding and sodding it, along with its regular maintenance, according to the mayor.

In the past, town staff would first do a report on the feasibility of such a project, possibly with some preliminary costing and then provide a recommendation to council. Public consultation would then follow.

"You've got to go to the people



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Fun on the toboggan hill in Memorial Park in 2007.

and then the reports ... not telling people what they should or shouldn't have," Altmann said of his process.

Altmann plans on making a note of motion on resurrecting the toboggan hill at the next council meeting, which is scheduled for Aug. 25, 7 p.m.

The mayor has no costing or timetable for its construction, but said it "would be a very good possibility" the toboggan hill could be ready for this winter.

In 2010, the toboggan hill in Thicketwood Park was relocated to a berm in the vicinity of Lori Avenue and Thicketwood Boulevard walkway.

The move was part of the Memorial Park master plan and Park Drive extension, then-mayor Wayne Emmerson told The Sun-Tribune.

"That was always the plan. It was supported by the residents," he said in April 2010.

The hill was also moved for safety reasons, according to a town staffer, who said York Regional Police had concerns about the lack of lighting and that you could not see around the side of the hill to the skateboard park.

While backhoes levelled the hill, young residents affixed handwritten signs to the surrounding fence requesting it be saved.



STAFF PHOTO/NICK IWANYSHYN

MPP Helena Jaczek speaks during the YOU 177 age friendly community announcement at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library Tuesday. The cabinet minister gave \$35,000 for a municipal aging study.

## Seniors' needs up for discussion

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Bring generations together to create a strong community.

That is the impetus behind WSYOU 177.

On Tuesday, the organization received a \$35,000 grant from the provincial government to study age-friendly community planning in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"It's all about engaging everyone in this project because each of us deserves to live in a community where we feel at home, where we feel supported," Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, told a group of about 40 people who gathered inside the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library to hear how the money will be spent.

So far, 56 organizations and municipalities have been awarded money from the \$1.5 million fund, according to Jaczek.

"We want to know what seniors need in terms of services, structures and policies, as well as how young people feel about growing up in our community," Brian Puppa, director of programs for WSYOU 177 told those gathered.

He noted physical structures like roads, buildings and homes garner the most attention when it comes to communities, "but it's the underlying psychosocial dynamics, the social infrastructure that makes the

community strong."

Parts of Whitchurch-Stouffville currently have one of the highest densities of people over the age of 65 in York Region, according to Puppa.

He also noted, by next year and for the first time ever, there will be more Ontarians over the age of 65 than children under 14 and by 2036, 35 per cent of the Canadian population will be over the age of 55.

Utilizing the World Health Organization's eight dimensions for age-friendly communities — public buildings, housing, transportation, community support, civic participation, communication, social participation as well as social inclusion — WSYOU 177 will undertake a community-wide consultation process to better understand the needs of local seniors.

In 10 months a report will be made available to the community and council with recommendations.

"I see where they're coming from ... but it's a little bit beyond the municipality. We can't tell the municipality and developers what to do," Mayor Justin Altmann told The Sun-Tribune.

"It's one thing to talk about it, but how are you going to implement it?" Altmann asked.

Pat Ogston, president of the 55+ Club likes the idea of an intergenerational community, but admitted some of her club members are struggling with what WSYOU 177 is trying to do.

"It's a new idea for them and sometimes new things take baby steps to get going," she told The Sun-Tribune.

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