

LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERS KEEPING YOU INFORMED ~ READ IT HERE!!!

This feature is made available to all Elected Officials FREE OF CHARGE as part of The Central Commitment to KEEPING YOU THE TAXPAYER INFORMED.



Mayor Adrian Foster

By Clarington Mayor Adrian Foster

Council Highlights from the March 25, 2024 meeting

**Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan moves forward**  
Council received a progress update on the Municipality's proposed Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan. Clarington engaged with residents to ask them about their priorities for parks, recreation and culture. Residents shared their opinions and recommendations online, at public open houses and in stakeholder focus groups. 3,203 surveys were submitted, representing over 8,000 people across all age groups.

Clarington's parks, recreation, and culture is viewed as a strength of the community that attracts new residents, visitors and economic development. Responses indicated that it should continue to be a high priority. Staff are reviewing that feedback as part of an analysis of community needs, which is part of the next phase in developing the draft Master Plan.

Residents have made it clear that they want more parks and green space in Clarington. The Municipality faces significant challenges in meeting that demand due to changes in Provincial housing and development legislation, particularly the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, also known as Bill 23. Considering these challenges, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan will be an important tool for Clarington to be able to continue supporting an exceptional quality of life for its residents. Read more about the impact of this legislation.

Clarington to develop an encampment response strategy

Clarington is replacing its Parks By-law with a rewritten Public Spaces By-law to modernize how it enforces and responds to encampments in public spaces, ensuring compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by connecting people to the supports they need within the Regional shelter system.

Council also directed staff to develop a protocol that clearly articulates a framework for Municipal Law Enforcement Officers to address encampments in consultation with the Region of Durham and the Durham Regional Police Service to ensure a human-centred, housing-first, health-focused, rights-based approach.

Clarington streamlines and modernizes advisory committee framework

Clarington is implementing changes to how its advisory committees operate. Council adopted a standardized framework for Clarington's advisory committee terms of reference, reflecting advances in technology, governance and accountability. The standardized template will provide better governance and improved effectiveness. For example, it requires that all committees prepare an annual report and work plan with initiatives and activities for Council to review.

Staff have been directed to work with members of Clarington's Task Force on Affordable Housing to prepare a new Terms of Reference for the task force and explore how it can continue to advise the Municipality on affordable housing in our growing community.

As a result of these changes, there will be new opportunities for volunteers on the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Management Advisory Committee for interested residents.

Bowmanville Dog Park to get upgraded lights

Bowmanville's furry residents will be able to enjoy an improved experience at the Leash-Free Dog Park thanks to a hardwired lighting system. Council directed staff to include the installation of the lighting system in the 2025 capital budget request.

The lighting will enhance opportunities for members of the community to get together and connect in an inclusive, safe and well-lit location while providing their pets with recreation and socialization space.

Clarington calls on the Province to review its funding approach for municipalities

Clarington and other municipalities spend, on average, about a third of their finances on services in areas of Provincial responsibility—and the cost is outpacing Ontario's contributions to municipalities by nearly \$4 billion a year.

While the current arrangement does not adequately address municipal financial pressures, the Province and municipalities have a long history of close collaboration to support their communities. That is why Council is calling on the Province to commit to working with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to conduct a comprehensive social and economic prosperity review of that arrangement, with the goal of promoting the stability and sustainability of municipal finances not only in Clarington, but across Ontario.

Shaw House will be future home of Clarington Emergency and Fire Services (CEFS) administration

The renovations of Shaw House at 156 Church Street in Bowmanville are underway, and the refreshed heritage building will be the new home to CEFS administration.

The property was originally intended to host a small business and innovation incubator. Council directed staff to explore other opportunities for the incubator, including the possibility of using the Sarah Jane Williams building, as Shaw House's size and layout is not ideal for the business needs of an incubator.

The Shaw House renovation will cost an additional \$325,000. Council approved additional funding of \$131,170 from the Community Services Building Refurbishment Reserve Fund, with the remaining funds coming from savings achieved from other completed capital projects.

Planning and development updates

As Clarington continues to grow, Council is taking proactive steps to promote responsible and balanced growth that develops the economy while protecting the environment.



Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

The Erosion of Democracy in Pickering and Beyond

By Lisa Robinson - Pickering City Councillor

In the heart of Pickering, a troubling trend is unraveling – the systematic erosion of democratic principles. The very foundation upon which our society thrives, the democratic process, is under attack, leaving citizens disenfranchised and their voices silenced.

The Corporation for the City of Pickering seems to be on a rampage, spearheading changes to policies and procedures that chip away at the rights of its citizens to engage in their governance. Fundamental to any democratic society is the ability for people to ask questions, seek transparency, and hold their elected officials accountable. However, these pillars of democracy are crumbling in Pickering.

Questions posed to staff and/or Council go unanswered, or their responses are veiled in half-truths, leaving citizens in the dark and fostering an environment of distrust. Time limits on speaking are arbitrarily slashed, question period removed, stifling of dissenting voices and undermining the principle of free speech. Microphones are muted at the whim of those in power, censoring viewpoints deemed unfavorable or inconvenient.

The recent banning of public video recording last Monday night, grants the Corporation of the City of Pickering the unchecked authority to shape its narrative. I, and others have personally witnessed glitches and time jumps when reviewing the City's previous meetings. Not having accurate recordings makes it impossible for those to see and/or hear the truth of public meetings that are held within Council Chambers. This move potentially provides the city with a tool to manipulate its narrative at will, easily eroding the public's trust in its government.

Bullying and intimidation for years have always played a part within Pickering Council. With Councillor's now presenting opposing views on behalf of their constituents, these tactics of bullying, intimidation, and now name-calling, have also begun to run rampant, in lockstep with the censoring. Opposing views of Councillor's on behalf of their constituents are met not with dialogue or debate, but with threats of referral to integrity commissioner and character assassination, all of this is just a distraction, while issues that challenge the status quo or expose political posturing and corruption are swept under the rug.

Residents of Durham, Pickering, and beyond are not only being silenced but have also been facing trespassing charges or even arrests for simply refusing to halt their speech when instructed by the mayor, or worse, for expressing their feelings. I, in no way, condone threatening behaviour, however, it is important to distinguish between actual threats and mere feelings of threat.

Just because someone feels threatened does not necessarily mean a genuine threat exists, and we must avoid conflating the two. This alarming trend illustrates a dangerous shift where individuals' feelings seemingly trump basic democratic rights. This underscores the urgent need to confront and challenge the erosion of democratic

values, ensuring that the rights of citizens are upheld and protected against arbitrary suppression and intimidation tactics.

Governments at all levels, not only Municipal, continue to widen the gap between themselves and the people, fueling frustration by spending taxpayer's money with reckless abandon, as if it were their own, without true community engagement or accountability. The days of consulting "the people" and putting their interests above all else seem to be a distant memory.

Sadly, Pickering is not alone in this assault on democracy. This death of democratic values reverberates across many municipalities, signaling a pervasive and insidious threat to the very essence of our society. Councillors and School trustees have been resigning amidst bullying and intimidations from colleagues with some tragic cases resulting in loss of life, while governments preach mental health advocacy and boast of code of conduct policies yet permit group targeting of individuals simply for carrying out their duties for the constituents.

In the face of such adversity, we are beginning to see a rise in citizens standing united in defense of democracy. Demanding accountability, transparency, and the restoration of our fundamental rights. We the people have a right to be heard, respected, and valued. The democratic process is not a privilege reserved for the few but a right belonging to us all.

I stand in solidarity with our Charter of Rights, the people of Pickering, and the preservation of the Democratic process. I believe in upholding morals, truth, and integrity, and prioritizing the needs of the people above all else.

"Strength Does Not Lie In The Absence Of Fear, But In The Courage To Face It Head-On And Rise Above It"



SOLVE OUR VAST TRANSPORT PROBLEM URGES BROCK MAYOR

By Brock Mayor Walter Schummer

Brock Mayor Walter Schummer said the township is facing a major problem with transportation for residents. Currently, the spread-out largely rural municipality is provided with only an on-demand service from Durham Region Transit (DRT). Transport is a regional responsibility, but it is an issue here. It was quite an issue during the election campaign, and it continues to be. The issue is so serious that, he said, it seems almost on a weekly basis, top Brock officials are having conversations with DRT top brass. There are no fixed routes in Brock while pointing out that a lot of people in the vast municipality don't have a car, either can't afford a car or don't have access to a car. But to get to almost anywhere around you need some kind of transportation, he points out.

GO bus lost

We lost the GO bus last year. There were a number of people in Brock who used that to get down to the GO station. That's gone now. We've got people in different parts of the township, especially youth, again with no vehicle; they can't even get a job because they have no way to get to work because a lot of the employment is up around the Beaverton area whether it's the Independent [grocer] and Tim Hortons, you know typical youth jobs. They have no way to get there. It's not really that far driving, but it's certainly far walking," Mayor Schummer pointed out. He said on-demand is an excellent service—if it works and is reliable. "But the reliability rate right now is very poor." There's just constant problems with it. In fact, at transit executive meetings they finally started coming out with stats on the on-demand and the effectiveness of it. The stats are not good, said the mayor. If it pick somebody up takes them to a doctor's appointment in Uxbridge, it doesn't bring them back. They're stranded. It's a real problem.

Fixed with On-demand mix

I think there needs to be maybe a mix [of fixed and on-demand service]. There are certain times of the day that a fixed service could function. I've spoken with [Durham Region] Chair and CEO John Henry, and said look, you know, most regional services are provided in the south. Now we have a lot of people that need those services – and those people do not have the resources for a car. So the transit is their only alternative. Hopefully there's going to be a significant improvement in the budget for DRT for 2024. I think it's about 7,000 hours of increased on-demand service in the north - though it's not just Brock. I think this will be a bit of a watershed year for transit here. Can we rely on the system or do we have to go back to the drawing board while pointing out that Brock has a spread-out geography. There's a lot of municipalities that are not quite as big as we are or haven't got as many roads to look after as we do, and that provides a unique challenge for us.