

Mississauga Residents' Associations Network (MIRANET)

1st Annual General Meeting Wednesday, February 3, 2010

Summary of Remarks made by Guest Speaker: Mayor Hazel McCallion

Mayor McCallion began by commending MIRANET on its success in such a short period of time. The fact that so many Councillors came to this AGM to hear what MIRANET had to say shows that it has been successful.

She noted that residents' associations have made a major contribution to the development of Mississauga over the past 30-40 years. Council has certainly wanted citizen input, and with the large amount of development that has transpired since the creation of Mississauga (with the fastest rate of growth of any urban area in Canada at one stage) there have been public meetings with citizens in every Ward to receive their input.

The Mayor noted that she has been called the "Queen of Sprawl" but now that Mississauga has the second-highest density in the GTA (after Toronto), that epithet may not be applicable. She observed that every urban expansion begins as sprawl.

The Mayor cited task forces she had created over the years to work with citizens on major issues facing the City, most recently the Mayor's Task Force on Sports, as well as past task forces on issues such as the salaries of the Mayor and Council, Regional Government (Peel), and the Arts in Mississauga.

Most exciting for the City were the public Visioning exercises that informed development of the City's new Strategic Plan: 100,000 citizens participated. Now there is a road map for the City to follow. It is a great Strategic Plan, but it will be difficult to implement and the Mayor advised MIRANET to track its progress and provide citizen impetus.

The Mayor noted that at one time there were approximately fifty (50) residents' associations established in the City of Mississauga. [NOTE: There are now approximately thirty (30) active groups]. She would send information to all 50 groups and often never hear anything back. With MIRANET, she appreciates that there is a communication network that now enables information to be sent and distributed, and resultant action to be coordinated.

The Mayor cited the example of the MIRANET Municipal Finance Subcommittee, which made a deputation to the City Budget Committee on January 13, 2010 concerning the 2010 Budget Cycle, after attending all the previous budget meetings. She noted that the MIRANET deputation by Chris Mackie and Peter Walton enabled her as Mayor to publicly address the issue of City contracts with unionized staff, and convey that she and Janice Baker, City Manager, had previously met with union leaders to discuss possible renegotiation of the contracts (particularly automatic annual salary increases) in light of the present downturn in the economy.

Further, the Mayor would be interested in hearing of the outcomes of future meetings planned between the MIRANET Municipal Finance reps and City staff including Patti Elliott-Spencer, Finance Director.

The Mayor expressed the need for citizens to go after the federal and provincial governments on policies that are detrimental to the City in which we live. At the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) it is acknowledged that direct citizen input to higher levels of government is required to effect change.

The Infrastructure Stimulus Program (ISF) is well underway, but the municipalities are trying to convey to the provincial and federal governments that such stimulus can't just be a one-shot deal. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Large Urban Mayors Caucus of Ontario (LUMCO) among other organizations are working together on this issue, but need citizen support.

Municipal property tax will ultimately return to what it should be: a source of revenue to fund municipal responsibilities. A task force on the relationship between municipalities and the province is active on this file. Currently, provincial court security costs and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) costs, for example, are on the property tax bill but will be phased out.

In closing the Mayor instructed MIRANET: "Don't be afraid to criticize", stating that once government knows what citizens are thinking, then it can be in a position to do something about it. So noted!