Rankin Crescent News

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For more information about our general neighbourhood and the people who live here, visit these local area websites: Junction Triangle website: www.junctiontriangle.ca Dig-In website: www.digin.ca

1. Federal Election – Vote on Monday, May 2.

Although many of us have become disaffected by politics and government, voting is the basis of our democracy. It remains our best means of influencing those who make the laws which we must follow. If we do not make the effort to vote, it can be argued that we do not have the right to complain about the decisions our elected politicians make on our behalf. Please vote. The polls are open from 9:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. Rankin Crescent voters living on the south half of the street are to vote at **The Rankin Apartments**, 55 Rankin, while those living on the north half of the street are to vote at **St. Luigi Catholic School**, 2 Ruskin Avenue at Perth Avenue, two short blocks north of Wallace. Remember to bring photo ID with you.

Of course, it is important to be an informed voter, so before you vote, each of us should have at least a basic knowledge of the various party platforms. To compare candidate viewpoints regarding a variety of local issues, there is a very useful candidate survey posted on the Junction Triangle website. Davenport candidates were invited to respond to ten questions posed by residents of our Junction Triangle neighbourhood. If you remain undecided, the candidate responses (unedited) to these questions may help you to decide who to vote for on Monday. The survey can be accessed here: http://www.junctiontriangle.ca/node/1101

2. Rankin Crescent Yard Sale – Saturday, May 28, 2011

A number of Rankin Crescent residents suggested holding a Rankin Crescent yard sale this spring to provide a chance for us to recycle those no-longer-needed items taking up space in our homes and garages. On April 22, we placed yard sale surveys in the mailboxes of every house on Rankin Crescent. Thank you for the 10 responses we have received to date. Although we were hoping for more feedback, we have, nevertheless, decided to go ahead with the yard sale in the hopes that others will join us. If you have very little to sell, simply contact us and we will pair you up with the closest neighbour who will be participating. For those who have nothing to sell, we hope that you will show your support by checking out what your neighbours have to sell or in some cases to give away. Besides, it is an excellent opportunity to visit with our Rankin Crescent neighbours after a rather long winter of hibernating indoors.

So, mark on your calendar the Yard Sale on Saturday, May 28th. We will post notices during the week prior to the event. If you would like to participate by selling items, or for more information, please contact Bob [contact info at the end of the newsletter].

3. Our Municipal Representatives

Ana Bailão, City Councillor for Ward 18, Davenport. We offer our rather belated congratulations to Ana Bailão who became our representative on City Council following the October 25 municipal election. Ana has a longstanding connection with our community and has pledged to represent the views of her community at city hall. She welcomes comments, suggestions, and feedback from us, her constituents. For our part, we have a duty to keep her informed of our views and concerns. So, we should not hesitate to contact her regarding issues of importance to us.

Contact information: talk to Ana at the Abrigo Centre (Suite 104) in Dufferin Mall every Saturday morning between 10 and 12 – no appointment necessary. Telephone her office at: 416-392-7012. Here is her website: www.anabailao.ca

We also offer our congratulations to our school trustees:

Maria Rodrigues, Public School Trustee, Ward 9, Davenport. 416-397-3069; maria.rodrigues@tdsb.on.ca

Barbara Poplawski, Separate School Trustee, Ward 10, Toronto. 416-512-3410; barbara.poplawski@tcdsb.org

4. A Fairer Voting System.

In the last federal election, just 59% of eligible voters in Canada cast a ballot (53% in our riding of Davenport), the lowest voter turnout in Canadian history. One main source of frustration is that winning candidates regularly receive less than 50% of the votes in their ridings; moreover, even when a majority government is elected, more often than not it receives less than 50% of the popular vote. The result is that the majority of us, the voters, are disappointed by most election outcomes.

Does Canada actually have representative democracy? In the 2008 federal election:

- the New Democratic Party attracted 1.1 million more votes than the Bloc Quebecois, but our current voting system gave the Bloc 49 seats, the NDP 37;
- 940,000 voters supporting the Green Party elected no one, while fewer Conservative voters in Alberta alone elected 27 Conservative MPs;
- in the prairie provinces, Conservatives received roughly twice the votes of the Liberals and NDP combined, but took seven times as many seats;
- as in the previous federal election, a quarter-million Conservative voters in Toronto elected no one and neither did Conservative voters in Montreal.

This is not true democracy. Historically, Canadians have usually been ruled by majority governments that the majority voted *against*. Canada is one of the few major nations still using the first-past-the-post voting system. Most democracies scrapped this winner-take-all system last century. Why? Because it fails to provide representation for all voters and it usually fails to provide legitimate majority rule. In other words, winner-take-all voting subverts the basis of representative democracy.

Today more than 80 countries use fair voting systems, often called "proportional representation". Fair voting systems have many variations but the core principle is the same: to get as close as possible to treating every voter equally, or in other words, to create true representative democracy.

When each vote has equal value, election results are proportional. A party that receives 40% of the votes will receive close to 40% of the seats in the legislature, not 60% or more. A party which receives 20% of the votes will win close to 20% of the seats, not 10% or none at all.

[The facts above are from Fair Vote Canada. For more thought-provoking information about proportional representation check out their website: www.fairvote.ca]

5. Rankin Crescent Residents – Information and Issues

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Monday, May 2 – Federal Election Day

Thursday, May 5 – Neighbourhood Safety Walk with Ana Bailão focussing on Wallace and Campbell. Meet at Angel's Café at Symington and Wallace at 7 p.m.

Saturday, May 28 - Rankin Crescent Yard Sale

LOCAL ISSUE:

Dog Poop. Some Rankin Crescent residents have expressed concern about the poor ethics of some of our neighbourhood pet owners. Although most pet owners are careful to scoop the poop and dispose of it properly, a minority have allowed their pets to defecate on private property (i.e. our front yards), and also in Rankin Park and in the boulevard area on the west side of Rankin between Wallace and the laneway. In some cases, the poop was scooped and bagged, but the poop bags were simply dumped. Besides being an environmental issue, this is a health and safety concern, especially since many young children are living on our street. If you own a pet, please act responsibly every time. It is not acceptable to allow your pet to poop or pee or trespass on private property. The law requires that pet owners pick up after their pets. If you see a pet owner who is not picking up after their pet, speak to them to encourage them to comply with the municipal bylaw, and if the pet owner refuses, get as much information as possible and contact the authorities. Note that Toronto Waste Management asks pet owners to put pet poop into plastic bags which should then be placed into your green bin for composting.

GARDROSE HOMEOWNER INFORMATION:

Garage Door Spring. One homeowner on the northern half of Rankin reported that the spring in his garage door broke not so long ago and had to be replaced. They are supposed to last for 10,000 lifts. Other Gardrose homeowners will likely experience this sooner or later.

RANKIN CRESCENT BUSINESSES:

If you operate your own small business out of your home, and would like to inform other Rankin Crescent residents of the expertise and services that you provide, please inform us. In the next issue, scheduled for later this spring, the Rankin Crescent News will profile Rankin Crescent home businesses. Most of us prefer to patronize local businesses, but in many cases we are unaware of their existence. Here is the first example:

Shiatsu by Sachiko. 209 Rankin Crescent. As some of you know, Sachiko operates her Japanese shiatsu therapeutic massage business out of our house. Sachiko is a fully-trained and experienced shiatsu massage therapist licensed by the City of Toronto. She has a portable massage table and, if you prefer, she will go to your home to provide massage therapy in the comfort of your own home. She is currently offering a 10% discount to Rankin Crescent residents, as well as a discount for first time clients. Contact Sachiko at: 416-539-8558 or ShiatsuBySachiko@yahoo.co.jp

ITEMS TO GIVE AWAY:

Weather King central air conditioning unit. Here at #209, we still have our original Weather King central air conditioning unit to give away. Presumably it is the same low quality unit installed by Gardrose in all of their houses from #158 to #225. Although it has been disconnected, to the best of our knowledge it is still in normal working order. Even if your unit is working fine, it may be useful for parts in the likely event of a future breakdown. If no-one wants it, we will have it properly removed and recycled later this spring or summer. [See contact information at the end of this newsletter.]

Child Safety Gates. We also have child safety gates which we no longer require. They are designed to fit the staircases in our house at #209, and, as a result, may fit well in other Gardrose-built houses. [See contact **information** at the end of this newsletter.]

6. The Airport - Union Station Rail Link – An Update.

To appease those of us who live near the Brampton GO rail line and who have objected to having over 400 diesel trains per day pass through our neighbourhood, Metrolinx (i.e. the Ontario government) has stated that in the long run, the line will be powered by electricity. However, in order to have the Airport rail link ready for the Pan American Games in 2015, it claims that it must use diesel locomotives. Diesel trains have numerous disadvantages including significant air pollution, fuelled by non-renewable energy, higher noise levels, longer stopping distances, and higher operating costs. [See Issue #1 of R C News for more details.]

It is difficult to understand why four years is insufficient time to electrify just 25 km of track between Pearson Airport and Union Station. Electric trains are not a new or complex technology – they have been in use throughout the world for over a century. It is even more difficult to understand why tens of millions of our tax dollars will be invested (wasted) to purchase diesel-powered trains if the line will be converted to electrically-powered trains in future. If the only reason Metrolinx (the Ontario government) is choosing diesel is to have the link in operation for the Pan American Games, surely our existing transportation infrastructure, with some simple, easy-to-do modifications, would be capable of providing ample transportation for the two week duration of the Games.

If you prefer to have the cleaner, quieter, safer, greener, and, in the long run, cheaper electricity-powered trains, contact the Ontario government, as well as our federal and municipal representatives, and insist that electricity-powered trains are the only viable choice – a two week sporting event notwithstanding – for what will become the busiest surface rail line in the country. For more information, especially re. who to contact about this issue, see the Clean Train Coalition website: www.cleantrain.ca

7. The BOBLAHBLOG – Personal Observations on Events and Issues, Big and Small

On the warm, sunny afternoon of March 11, 2011 we were enjoying a relaxing visit with Sachiko's parents in their home in Odawara, Japan. Without warning, the earthquake hit and their old house was shaking and rattling such that we were out of the house within seconds. Once outside, the seismic ground waves which lasted a few minutes forced us to catch our balance a couple of times to keep from falling. It is quite the sensation when "terra firma" moves unpredictably under your feet. It was the strongest earthquake that any of us had ever experienced.

Once the shaking had subsided we went back inside and turned on the TV to get more information. We were surprised to learn that we were quite far from the epicentre – about 500 km – and that the earthquake was so powerful – magnitude 9.0 – the strongest ever recorded in earthquake-prone Japan. Although there was very little damage in our part of Japan, we knew that for those closer to the epicentre it would be a different story. Stunned, we watched on live TV as the tsunami waves ravaged the coastal areas to the north and east. We assume that all of you have seen these scenes of devastation on TV as well, but for us, the live coverage of the tsunami advancing inland from the coast northwest of us was truly shocking to watch, and to be so powerless to do anything to save the people in its path was distressing in the extreme.

Personally, we are happy to report that none of Sachiko's family members or friends was affected by the quake or its aftermath, but we feel so sorry for the people living near the Pacific coast in northern Honshu.

Sachiko's parents' old wooden house, where they have lived for over 40 years, is located in a low-lying area beside a river, with no high land nearby, just 1 km from the Pacific. Had a similar quake occurred offshore from Odawara – it is also an active earthquake zone – the resulting tsunami would almost certainly have washed away their house and perhaps us as well if we would not have had the foresight to seek safety immediately. It is a very sobering thought for us.

This is Issue 2 of an occasional newsletter distributed to the 107 households of Rankin Crescent. It has been printed on 100% recycled paper. Your comments and feedback are welcome. If you have information, local news, or personal stories you would like to share with Rankin Crescent neighbours in a future issue, please contact me. Also, if you would like to receive an electronic version of this newsletter, please e-mail me and I will send you one. Note that your privacy is respected. No names, addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses or any other personal information that comes into my possession will be given to anyone else without your permission.

Bob Haskett 209 Rankin Crescent 416-539-8558 Rankin Crescent News@yahoo.ca