**A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Greetings to all members and former members:

It has been over a year since we last sent out a general newsletter to all residents of our area; this is much too long a period and we will work hard over the next several months to correct that.

Over the past year and a half, the OPA has been very active in building our membership and our Board of Directors. Membership has increased by approximately 20% and we have added two new Directors to our team allowing us to increase our involvement with the many neighbourhood issues that have come to the fore. While the increase in membership is gratifying, we will continue to strive to broaden our base within the neighbourhood. In that regard, one of our newer Directors, Jerome Sneiderman, is actively working on program to increase area awareness of the OPA thereby encouraging more residents to join our group.

Our larger team of Directors has enabled our direct involvement in many key issues of concern to our area – Yonge/Eglinton urban growth centre boundaries, RioCan recapture of open space at the Y/E Centre, Revised Zoning By-laws and a large number of Committee of Adjustment hearings regarding residential developments. In particular, the results of the Committee hearings have been most encouraging in that, in all cases, modifications of the projects have achieved results that are more acceptable to the immediate neighbours.

Since our last letter, with the help of member Arleigh Crawford, we have made gradual improvements to our website in an effort to make it more current and informative; this is an ongoing process which will have even more emphasis in the coming year. In the meantime, please visit us at www.orioleparkassociation.com to keep up to date on local happenings.

The Oriole Park Association needs your support. We have a history of over 40 years in the neighbourhood. Many of you receiving this letter are not current members but have been in the past; some of you have never held membership and are unfamiliar with the OPA. Please visit the website, view our Mission Statement and see what we do for the community. If you have any questions, feel free to drop us a note to the website e mail address or call myself or any one of our other Directors.

We are here to serve the residents of the Oriole Park/ Chaplin Estates area and for that reason we ask for your support. To join the OPA simply fill in the [membership application form](http://www.orioleparkassociation.com/Membership_Form.html) and mail or hand deliver it with a cheque in the appropriate amount to our Treasurer at the address on the form.

**And finally, I want to remind you of our Annual General Meeting which will take place on March 29 at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre at 7:00 pm. Our guest speaker will be our newly elected Councillor, Josh Matlow.**

**Welcome to the Oriole Park Association**

Our neighbourhood is approximately 80 years old, and for close to 40 years the OPA has represented the interests of our community.

Membership in the OPA reinforces a sense of neighbourhood and pride in our community. The OPA is our advocate on matters that affect us all such as planning, development, traffic and safety. It represents our interests at City Hall and Queen’s Park, and works with our elected representatives at both levels of government to protect and enhance our community.

The OPA works with surrounding residents associations and is a founding member of FoNTRA, the Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations, an umbrella group which represents residents on key matters affecting residential neighbourhoods and city planning.

The OPA is committed to maintaining working relationships with Oriole Park Public School and the Toronto Police Service - 53 Division, to strengthen our neighbourhood.

**Highlights from the past year**

The past two years have been especially busy for the OPA. We have attended over 40 public meetings on various issues – RioCan at Yonge/Eglinton, the new zoning bylaw, urban boundaries at Yonge/Eglinton, and the municipal election candidate meetings. We have written letters, advised area residents about development applications, and attended 7 or more Committee of Adjustment meetings.

Here are some highlights of our activity in the community.

**MayFair**

On Saturday May 29th, 2010, the OPA participated in another successful Oriole Park Public School MayFair, handing out free popsicles, signing up new OPA members, and chatting with parents and area residents about community issues. We’ll be there again this year in May.

**Yonge/Eglinton Urban Growth Centre Boundaries**

In late September 2010, the OPA delivered a letter from our Board of Directors to Gary Wright, Chief Planner and Executive Director of the City of Toronto Planning Department, voicing our concern about the Yonge/Eglinton boundaries and requesting clarification that these boundaries would remain as delineated and not encroach onto residential areas, especially Berwick Avenue to the south.

**Councillor Michael Walker**

In November 2010, the OPA presented a special gift to retired Councillor Michael Walker, in appreciation for his 28 years of dedicated service to Ward 22 (St. Paul’s).

**RioCan at Yonge/Eglinton**

During the past year, the RioCan application to enclose the open space at Yonge/Eglinton elicited a very strong reaction from area residents and concerned citizens. A coalition of area ratepayer associations was established to review the application and provide alternative solutions that would preserve the open space. There was considerable apprehension about the potential loss of valuable open space on the northwest corner of Yonge/Eglinton. Seven public meetings on this issue, including two strategy sessions with coalition ratepayers, were attended by our OPA Secretary, Richard Macfarlane, with pertinent information posted to our website. However, with up to 35 residents and ratepayer representatives in the public gallery at City Council Chambers, Toronto City Hall, City Council approved the RioCan application.

**New Zoning Bylaw**

After extensive public consultation meetings and submissions by key spokespersons representing commerce, industry, and residential communities, the City of Toronto presented its new harmonized zoning bylaw, officially approved on August 27th, 2010. During 2009 and 2010, Richard MacFarlane of the OPA attended four public meetings and recorded the concerns of various key citizens regarding the change from the old to new zoning requirements and restrictions.

In summary, people are concerned about the complexity of the bylaw, the problem in understanding terminology, and how the new rules apply, particularly in residential housing applications for variances. There was also great concern about the lack of time for input, from the draft to final stages, and not enough time to review, understand, and provide meaningful comments about the revised new zoning bylaw before it was presented for final approval. At present, there are 694 appeals of the new bylaw.

**Committee of Adjustment Notices**

As you all know, there is a considerable amount of renovation and new construction taking place in the OPA area and, as a result, we have been involved with several Committee of Adjustment proceedings with various resident groups. This is something we are always willing to do.

There is, however, one thing that seems to come to the fore frequently in these situations; some people are unsure how to react to these notices.

First of all, the notice will come with some plan or sketch showing what the new or modified structure will look like. You should carefully review the plan and the requested variances to see if these pose any problem to you directly or indirectly. If there is insufficient detail in what you receive, the notice will specify where you can go to view the plans in more detail.

Then consult with your neighbours, particularly the ones immediately adjacent to the project (if that doesn’t happen to be you). Be sure you fully understand the implications of the requested variances as some things look less invasive on paper than they really are and vice versa. If the applicant has done his/ her “homework”, the project will have already been discussed with the residents in closest proximity and may have been found acceptable to them.

As an association, we do not pro-actively take a position of opposition to applications to the Committee unless there is a matter of serious principle or precedent. However, where there is significant resident opposition to a project and the variances are, in our view, of a significant nature, we will take a position with the Committee in support of the residents. Anything the OPA does in relation to an application does not replace the residents’ views and it must be understood that the voices of the ratepayers in the immediate proximity will carry the most weight with the Committee.

**Home Security**

Making one’s home secure should be one of the prime concerns of any homeowner and there are many simple things we can all very easily do to improve home security.

First of all, it is very important to be aware of what criminal activity is occurring in your area. The most effective way of doing this is to sign on to TPS LINKS, a communication service of our local division (#53) of the Toronto Police Service, by visiting the website at www.torontopolice.on.ca and following the prompts. You will then receive frequent telephone updates and alerts on various scams, threats, criminal activity etc., in the neighbourhood. This is an excellent information service provided free of charge by Toronto Police Services.

More information on TPS LINKS is available on the OPA website - www.orioleparkassociation.com. On the Welcome page, click on the current 53 Division Community Bulletin and scroll to page 7 to see the information.

Making the house physically secure is the next step and there are many ways of achieving this. A look at the suggestions published each month (pages 13 and 14) in the 53 Division Community Bulletin gives you a great check list of common sense actions to take for your protection. How many times have you walked past a house after dark with unshoveled snow, car(s) in the driveway covered with snow and not a light to be seen front, back or inside. This is just an open invitation for break-in. The cost of burning a 60 watt bulb for 12 hours at the off-peak rate in Toronto is about 4 cents and about 5.8 cents at the shoulder rate. This is a very simple and inexpensive way to improve your security. People who are trying to break into houses don’t like lights shining on them!

Another relatively easy form of protection is to install internal bars on all basement windows. Basement windows are an easy way to gain access to a home; no great amount of noise involved – just the breaking of a small pane of glass that can easily be muffled by covering it with a heavy towel before hitting it. Once the glass is broken, it’s a simple matter to slip through the opening and drop to the floor below thereby getting access to the whole house. Effective modular, width-adjustable bar units that can easily be installed by anyone who can drill a hole and wield a screwdriver are available from about $50 per window. The manner of installation is such that even if the window is broken, it is not possible to remove the bars with a screwdriver from the outside.

Sad to say but the simple act of answering your doorbell can be a hazard. It is a very good idea to have a viewer (peep hole) installed in your door so you can see who is calling before opening the door – particularly in hours of darkness. If you have any doubts, don’t answer. No caller can be that important but your own safety is.

When all is said and done, we realize that it is quite impossible to make a home totally burglar-proof but many of these simple actions can make your home unattractive to burglars who want a quick way in and out - usually in the dark.

Basically, the best overall advice we can offer is to visit the 53 Division Community Bulletin through our website as suggested above and review the suggestions on pages 13 and 14; this is an excellent guide to making your home more secure. And please take note that, at the end of the list of suggestions, 53 Division offer to do a home security audit if that is what you prefer.

**LIKE A TREE IN YOUR BACKYARD?**

**LEAF – Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests
Full Service Backyard Tree Planting Program**

LEAF is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection and improvement of the urban forest. Since 1996 LEAF has helped citizens plant over 16,000 native trees and shrubs in their gardens.

Their Backyard Tree Planting Program offers native trees and shrubs to homeowners at a subsidized cost through the contribution of our supporting partners. Their certified arborists will help you make an educated decision about the type of tree that best suits your property, and where it should be planted.

The service includes:

* 30-minute site consultation with our arborist
* 5 to 8 foot tall native tree
* Between $150 to $200 per tree
* Full planting service

Native shrubs are available for $25.

To book a consultation or to order shrubs visit [www.yourleaf.org](http://www.yourleaf.org/) or call 416.413.9244.