

ARTICLE - NORTH TORONTO/VILLAGE POST – Councillor Walker

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St. Paul's Residents Arise

City Council passed its Capital Budget on March 7th with over half of it going to the TTC. Investing in transit is a good thing in and of itself but there are many competing projects that will not get done. Our roads are in the worst shape they've ever been in; our parks and forestry issues are being neglected; our water and sewage system is crumbling below our feet; our waterfront still lays fallow and our world-class transit-hub, Union Station, is a waning opportunity that's wasting away under our noses. I did not vote for this transit-only Capital Budget.

The mayor's priorities seem to be detached from the present context of the city. Instead of putting funding towards the priorities named above or new community centres or opening up our public schools for after-school programming or improving our greenspaces, the mayor is putting our money toward a new conference centre at Exhibition Place, renovations to his office and City Hall, renovations to Nathan Phillips Square, and the Front Street Extension to name a few.

Worse, this Capital Budget authorizes our debt load to grow to \$3.1 Billion by 2011 which translates into \$4000 owed by every citizen. And worse still, we'll have similar conditions of disrepair in 2011 – what happens in 2012? There's simply no fiscal discipline displayed by the Mayor and this Council, and it's going to get us into deeper financial trouble in the long-term.

Unfortunately, overdevelopment in St. Paul's still grows with the blessing of the unelected Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). In South Hill, a low-density neighbourhood, at 200 Russell Hill Rd., a development proposal for 22 units in 5 and 4 storey condo buildings on ravine land was approved Feb. 20th after vigorous opposition from the neighbourhood and City Council. This development will be 3 times larger than what is permitted, will have 44 underground parking spots, and will destroy some of the only old growth forest habitat left in downtown Toronto.

The OMB must be abolished – there is no sound reason why we must endure this 'Sword of Damocles' above our heads. City Council having to make planning decisions in the shadow of the OMB does not respect this City and its residents. Final decisions should rest at the city-level. This is another example of the OMB incrementally ruining our city.

It will take all of us to stand-up and speak-up to our provincial representatives during this election year to turn this tide of attack on our neighbourhoods. Intensification must be responsible intensification and not just dense-ification.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office at councillor_walker@toronto.ca, www.michaelwalker.ca or call 416.392.7906.