

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Funding, Baseball, The Hip and more?.

By Chris Ballard, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

Funding

The riding of Newmarket-Aurora has had some big funding announcements in the past couple weeks. The first recipient was Rose of Sharon. This important group received an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$149,400 over 35 months.

Rose of Sharon has been helping young mothers since 1985, and offers counselling, education and resources to young mothers across York Region. These services are essential to ensure the wellbeing of the young mothers and their children. The new funding will allow for young mothers to access new support programs.

The second funding announcement I had the pleasure of attending was at Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District. The province of Ontario is investing \$6.5 million in fire safety upgrades for community service agencies like this group.

The funding received by Community Living will allow the organization to upgrade its fire alarms, fire doors and sprinkler systems. With this funding, families can rest easy knowing the facilities at Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District will continue to be a safe place for their loved ones.

Baseball Tournaments

The Aurora Diggers U16 Bantam fast pitch team are provincial grand champions and, as I write this, are battling for the Canadian Eastern championship. The Diggers are representing Ontario in the championships held in New Brunswick. I'm not sure how they've done, but I wish them the best of luck and I know that they will make Ontario and Aurora proud. Thank you to the young women, their coaches, volunteers, and their parents for their dedication and sporting spirit. That spirit of volunteerism is what makes communities across Ontario, like Aurora, so great! It's not too late to support the team financially. Check out their fundraising page on www.youcaring.com.

In other baseball news, I was honoured to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Squirt Boys Provincial Softball tournament. Newmarket hosted 12 teams from across the province ? one of the largest tournaments they have ever hosted.

Congratulations to all the players, coaches volunteers and parents who attended. Again, a special thank you to parents and volunteers who helped make their tournament such a success. (And, yes, my pitch made it across the plate.)

The Tragically Hip

Canada virtually shut down in the evening of August 20 as millions of us watched the final concert of The Tragically Hip, with frontman Gord Downie. Entire communities across the country, province and here in Newmarket-Aurora, were brought together to say their farewells to the band that has represented Canada since 1983.

Mr. Downie announced in May he was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. The last performance by Mr. Downie was amazing and a great way to say goodbye to all the Hip's Canadian fans. Every day, 27 Canadians hear the words: ?You have a brain tumour,? and an estimated 55,000 people in Canada are living with a brain tumour. Brain tumours do not discriminate ? they affect the lives of both adults and children alike. There is no known cause of brain tumours, therefore there are no prevention strategies. Brain tumours are the most frequent cause of cancer-related solid tumour death in children and young adults. There are over 120 different types of brain tumours. Donations to help find a cure can be made to the Gord Downie Fund for Brain Cancer Research through the Sunnybrook Foundation.

This past spring, I brought forward a Private Members' Bill in Parliament that would establish May as Brain Tumour Awareness Month in Ontario. It received unanimous approval from all MPPs in the House. As a Minister, I don't believe I can bring it to final reading ? but I vow to find an MPP willing to move it ahead. Raising awareness of brain tumours is critical to finding a cure.

GO Parking

There has been concern recently about Metrolinx, the parent of GO Transit, renting a church parking lot at Yonge and Maple Streets. GO will need additional parking for 130 cars, for about six months, during construction to expand the Aurora train station. I am satisfied that Metrolinx tried to find an alternative to the church parking lot, but was unable to.

The Town of Aurora was contacted by Metrolinx to see if some of the parking lot at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex might be available, but was told ?no.? I believe there will be action on the Town's part now that this has been made public and I feel assured

that if GO needs extra parking beyond its six month contract with the church, it will be found at a better location. Parking around the GO station has been a hot topic for many months. As GO continues to improve both train and bus service, more commuters flock to use it, and it becomes a victim of its own success. That's why I worked hard to have a new station added to the train line on Mulock Drive in Newmarket.

The new station will help relieve parking woes in Aurora. Speaking as a Go Train commuter myself, I also look forward to the day it becomes convenient for many of us to catch a bus to Aurora's GO station.

I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.