

## Civic Square makes way for Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park

**By Brock Weir**

When the Government of Canada launched the Diamond Jubilee Medal last year to mark the 60th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne, they sought to honour 60,000 Canadians who have followed the Queen's own example in giving back to their neighbourhood, their province, and their country.

Now, both these Aurora recipients and the grand lady herself will be commemorated in Aurora's newly-minted Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park.

Council decided to re-name Civic Square Park, located on John West Way near Town Hall, in honour of the occasion. In addition to new park signage, a plaque mounted on a rock will be installed bearing the colourful Diamond Jubilee Emblem designed by 11-year-old British student Katherine Dewar as well as the Canadian emblem designed by the Government of Canada.

After considering various options in and around town for the royal honours, Councillors seemed largely pleased with their decision last week.

"I drove by Civic Square Park because I only remembered it as a soccer field and it has a very nice entrance," said Councillor John Abel. "It has a big, raised bed and I think it could be quite a tribute. As you drive by, I think it would be quite appropriate if we put some money into landscaping and it would be a garden befitting Her Majesty."

Councillor Paul Pirri, however, said he wasn't so sure. In previous discussions to get to this point, he spoke in favour of having a larger, more significant park as a tribute to the Queen, a "destination park" that would draw people from around the community with various unique amenities. This proposal, he said, missed the mark.

"This is nothing more than a token gesture," he said. "I don't see it as accomplishing anything. I definitely don't think it is a park befitting Her Majesty's name. If we're planning on doing something later on, we're just putting the cart before the horse and naming it for the sake of naming it and that is something I completely disagree with."

"If it is a park that is staying the way it is, I don't think it is a park befitting the name. I don't know why, but I am just extremely opposed to this."

Now that Council has signed off on the naming of the park, the proposed plaque will also bear the names of a growing list of Aurora recipients of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, a final list which will be published in late spring by the Chancellery of Honours at Rideau Hall.

While Councillor Evelyn Buck expressed a similar sentiment to Councillor Pirri that she "hoped this isn't the last we hear about the park and we're going to make it something special", she had reservations about including the names of the medal recipients on the plaque.

"I don't think that is a particularly good thing to do," she said. "I am visualising a park name with all the other names and I think it is just taking away from the tribute we're paying."

Nearly 20 names so far are slated to be included on the plaque, but this number could turn out to be significantly higher once all the local nominees from organizations partnered with Rideau Hall on the awards, including local police forces and charities, are tallied.

Civic Square Park was the clear favourite in the royal naming stakes. Municipal staff originally proposed naming a parkette near St. John's Sideroad and Bathurst Street in honour of the Jubilee, but Councillors wanted to mark the occasion with a more significant park. A shortlist was presented to Council last month of parks that had not been named by or in honour of any particular individual. These included Town Park - an option which found favour in Mayor Geoffrey Dawe - along with the originally proposed Ballymore Parkette, Tamarac Green Park, Summit Park (which was later struck off the list due to its name being chosen in a public contest) and Civic Square Park.