



Trustee
Yalini Rajakulasingam

Ward 21, Scarborough North



July 19, 2023

RE: Support of MM8.24 Building Up Our Parks and our Communities

Dear Mayor Chow and City Councillors

Over the last several months, Councillor Myers and his staff have engaged with our school community adjacent to Muirlands Park about planned capital park improvements.

Muirlands Park is based in Scarborough North, where most families speak another language other than English at home. This vibrant community contributes to the diversity we take immense pride in as Torontonians. This community also faces many inequities, especially around access, services and opportunities. Over the years, I've seen low levels of engagement being misinterpreted as a lack of interest. However, I believe that we will hear more from this community with the right engagement strategy, one that is culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and community-specific. We should not expect communities to come to us; instead, we should be more accessible and build trust with local communities. As a Trustee, I've seen how successful engagement in this community can be if it's done properly. This community has a lot to say; we need to give them the opportunity to say it.

Our school – Macklin Public School - is a tight-knit community; our schoolyard is well used and backs onto the Park. Over a hundred residents of all ages and ethnicities attended a community town hall meeting on July 5th, which was co-hosted by Councillor Jamaal Myers, my colleague Toronto Catholic School Board Trustee Garry Tanuan and myself, and with the support of the school principals from Macklin Public School and Divine Infant Catholic School.

While attendees were most interested in basketball, residents expressed similar interest in other options: accessible pathways and trails, BBQ pits, green gyms, playground equipment, skate trails, splash pads, shelters, seating, tennis, and trees.

I welcome capital improvements for Muirlands Park as this community needs revitalization. However, this process must be community-led. Our parks are spaces for the people and communities around them. They should be empowered to make decisions about their public space that reflect their needs, diversity, and interests.

I strongly urge Council to support the motion to hold the current funding until a suitable community-led process can be identified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yalini".

Yalini Rajakulasingam