

Residents demand parking restriction to combat GO commuters



By Brock Weir

Council created the problem and it's Council's job to fix it.

That was the view of many residents living within walking distance of the Aurora GO Station at a meeting of Downtown Town Park Ratepayers last week.

Victoria Hall was packed on Thursday night as the Ratepayers gathered to sound off on a number of community issues, with on-street parking on several area streets being a primary concern.

Councillors Wendy Gaertner, Sandra Humfryes, Harold Kim, Tom Mrakas, and Michael Thompson, along with Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny attended the meeting where citizens demanded solutions.

At the root of the problem is overflow parking from GO commuters, an issue that has been a long-standing problem in the area but, more immediately, the impact recent parking restrictions around Town Park approved by Council have had on the on-street parking situation.

"We have been doing this for 10 years," said Derek Rundle. "We were patient when you built the first parking lot, and then they tore down the barns and built the second parking lot and we were patient then. Then you built the parking structure and we have been enduring ? well, I can't say the word.

"Let's get this straight ? there is a real hatred for the GO people in our area. It is pure hatred because they are so ignorant. We have been doing this for 10 years. All we want is three hour parking in our area. They are parking in our areas just for pure convenience. They don't want to take their BMWs, Mercedes and everything else into [the parking garage] and get them scratched. Just put up signs to stop parking in our area. It is a simple solution that has nothing to do with Metrolinx. It has to do with the Town's looking after the people. That is why Rob Ford was so popular. That is why Donald Trump is so popular. They listen to the people.?"

When Council limited parking around Town Park area, it didn't stop the drivers from coming, the neighbours contended. It merely made them look elsewhere in the neighbourhood for places to park, moving away from Town Park to further flung streets such as Harrison and Connaught.

Residents said in addition to three-hour parking limits in this area overall, they wanted better communication with the Town and Metrolinx, the Provincial body that oversees GO Transit.

With GO planning a large-scale expansion to all-day train service in the future, the neighbours said they were worried the problem was only going to get worse.

"Every street in this quadrant has some sort of parking on it," said Pat Reynolds, a resident of Harrison. "Our street, along with Wells Street and Connaught has zero constraints. Everybody north of us is being protected to some degree from GO. We are getting

zero.?

This is causing problems, he added with snow removal, waste pickup, and other services.

?We didn't retire to be part of a GO Transit parking lot. Someone came to visit my wife a few days ago and I had to put out my car at 6.30 a.m. to protect a spot so they would have somewhere to park when she came to visit. Do you hear that on your streets?? he asked Councillors. ?No.

?We have an immediate problem that was created by a Town Council decision to take parking out of that park. As soon as you did, our street was end to end on both sides. You made a decision only recently, so you can make another quick decision to protect our street without worrying about a study being done first.?

Councillors, however, pointed out the Town Park restrictions would be up for Council review next month.

?When we did it initially, we said we're trying to address an issue around Town Park but we knew we might be creating issues in other parts of Town, so we said let's try this, let's review what is going on at a later date because we don't want to solve one problem to create another one,? said Councillor Thompson. ?What I am hearing today is there is an urgency. The problem has moved on and it is creating even more issues on other streets and we need to look at it sooner rather than later.

?Can we do something sooner rather than later? I don't think anybody in this room wants to see us wait until May. They want us to do something now.?

Added Councillor Humfries: ?Yes, we approved the changes, but we're looking for strong guidance in our infrastructure department. We will be going back and sharing you're disappointed because I am just as disappointed and unhappy right now.?

For Mr. Rundle, the situation was an accident waiting to happen. Emergency vehicles, he contended, had challenges navigating the areas where parking lines both sides of the street.

?What are we going to do with fire trucks? Garbage trucks barely squeeze in and it is a safety issue,? he said. ?What are you going to say when my house burns down??