



Jon BURNSIDE

SUMMER 2024 COMMUNITY UPDATE

City Councillor, Ward 16 Don Valley East



Ward Boundary

Update on Possible Ward 16 Boundary Changes

Top of mind for many Don Valley East residents - including me - is the fate of our riding.

Federally, the decision to eliminate Don Valley East (by dividing and absorbing into three other ridings) is unfortunately official.

However, provincially and municipally, there is still hope. The Ford government has the authority to keep the status quo. If they do follow their federal counterparts, they could either compel the City to do the same or allow us to decide ourselves.

I have already advocated directly to Premier Ford, and I will continue to promote keeping Don Valley East intact! With elections planned for 2026, time is running out for the province to make any changes so there is reason for optimism.



As part of my Neighbourhood Town Hall initiative we met with residents at Flemingdon Park's Gateway Public School in April. We answered questions on everything from housing to community safety.



Every Monday at 7:50 a.m. I join John Moore to discuss current affairs for Talk 1010's **Moore in the Morning** show.

Vacant Home Tax

This year's Vacant Home Tax (VHT) rollout was an absolute debacle. Communication by the City was both confusing and inadequate.

Tens of thousands of homeowners were unaware that they needed to declare their home as their primary residence on **an annual basis**. Even many of those who were aware found the website confusing while language barriers added another layer of difficulty. Our office alone helped over 200 people with either their declaration or an appeal after the deadline.

City Council had the opportunity to abolish the VHT at its April session. I voted to do so because I felt the VHT created apprehension, anguish and anger amongst residents. Additionally, City staff were not able to answer MY questions or provide any data on its impact on the housing market. Nor were they able to articulate what a successful VHT program even looked like.

Unfortunately, the vote was lost (18-5, 3 absent) so the VHT is here to stay. Let's hope vast improvements are made for next year.

Community Safety

Community safety is paramount for most residents, especially given the high number of vehicle thefts and home break-ins. My car was stolen from my driveway and never recovered. Many residents feel unsafe, and the statistics are not good. In 2023, car thefts in 33 Division (most of Ward 16) were up 94.5% while break-ins increased by 64.5%.

Many residents have created WhatsApp chat groups to stay informed while police officers from 33 Division have attended many safety meetings to answer questions and give advice. Extra officers are deployed based on crime analytics and have been dispatched on bicycles and all-terrain vehicles to patrol high-risk areas.

To Mayor Chow's credit, her budget fully funded Toronto Police's request and now they need to improve the basics such as 911 response times. The average response time has decreased from 22 minutes to 18, but this is still unacceptable. I will continue to work with 33 Division to devote as many resources as possible, while it's my hope that the federal government mandates stricter anti-theft measures on new vehicles. If Apple can make a \$1500 iPhone secure, why can't Toyota, Honda or Ford make their cars secure?