

## A Hot AGM! The future of CFB Rockcliffe Lands at Issue



By Jeffrey Thiessen

The Manor Park AGM, held on Tuesday, June 7th was a "hot" event in more ways than one. Despite a beautiful, if somewhat hot and humid, evening, the meeting was well attended by residents of Manor Park and a full slate of invited speakers. Numerous groups also had tables set up to discuss a wide range of issues.

As typical of an AGM, the slate of Manor Park Officers and Directors was presented and passed. The state of the Manor Park Community Association was discussed, and Jim Kenward, the Treasurer of the Manor Park Chronicle, received an award from the Association in recognition of his many years of outstanding volunteer service to the community. This was followed up by informative presentations from our invited speakers, including: Hon. Mauril Bélanger Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages, Associate Minister of National Defence, Minister for Internal Trade; The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Culture; Councillor Jacques Legendre - Ward 13 - Rideau-Rockcliffe; and, RCMP/CPC - Director General: Chief Superintendent Mike Saunders.

The temperature in the gym surely increased a degree or two after Councillor Legendre's address, which included an assessment of the current situation surrounding the Rockcliffe Airbase.

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The transfer of the Airbase from DND to another Federal Department or Agency (notably the Canada Lands Company) has been a topic in the news for many years now. For whatever reason, the transfer has not occurred, yet buildings on the Base continue to be demolished. So what is the plan for this magnificent property?

Councillor Legendre raised this issue, and noted that he was concerned that the fate of the airbase should be determined, one way or another. At this point, the Councillor seems to be concerned that the City of Ottawa could have another Lebreton Flats situation, whereby prime real estate sits vacant, underutilized, and nothing in particular planned for its future. Councillor Legendre's concerns are with the planning of these lands. I do not think this is an outrageous concern. At present, the land is in limbo. This land represents an incredible opportunity, either for the Federal Government to develop alternative federal uses, or, allow the Canada Lands Company to purchase the property and commence the planning process.

Somewhat in parallel, residents of Manor Park expressed similar concerns. At the AGM, the MPCA Planning and Development Committee distributed a preliminary transportation survey. While in no shape or form was this a scientific survey, it is interesting to note that the number one concern of residents was that of future traffic volumes, in particular, the development of the Rockcliffe Airbase. At present, there are only two full-time access points to the Base - Codd's Road/Montreal Road, and Hemlock/St. Laurent Blvd. Any development on this land will have traffic consequences for residents of Manor Park.

The future of these lands will greatly impact the shape and function of eastern Ottawa. A new federal presence would bring workers and economic spin-offs to the surrounding communities including Manor Park. Of course with economic growth comes associated growth in transportation-related issues, and the Rockcliffe Airbase will need some creative thinking to solve its transportation issues. If the land remains in the federal land inventory, the National Capital Commission would need to address the planning issues in conjunction with the City of Ottawa and other key stakeholders.

Alternatively, what happens if the land is "sold" to the Canada Lands Company. The planning

process would then shift from an NCC process to a City of Ottawa process. Rumour has it that CLC would like to build 4,000 units accommodating about 10,000 people and some commercial uses. Regardless of the actual numbers of units and people - this will be determined through the City's planning process (and is also a function of the real estate market) - there will be a very real issue in dealing with the traffic to and from the site. The Rockcliffe Base will provide the City with a chance to showcase its commitment to "Smart Growth" and implementing its new Official Plan. Due to its location and transportation issues, the Rockcliffe Base lends itself to Transit Oriented Development (TOD). I think a real commitment to transit will be required to adequately develop this site.

Imagine then that CLC is now the owner of the land. What can we expect? If you can judge future corporate behaviour by past corporate behaviour, then the Rockcliffe Airbase should become a jewel in Ottawa's crown. CLC has developed numerous properties, and have demonstrated a commitment to an open planning process and respecting the environment. In the end, the CLC is in business to turn a profit (with proceeds returning to the Canadian taxpayer), but in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. If you want more proof, seek out information on Garrison Woods (previously a DND site in Calgary).

The "Community Success Stories" page on the CLC website gives an idea of what CLC has accomplished ([www.clc.ca/clcma.nsf](http://www.clc.ca/clcma.nsf)). I am very familiar with the Garrison Woods site having grown up next to the military housing site. Not to sound like a CLC advertisement, but the work that CLC did in Garrison Woods has revitalized the adjacent communities (and this was before oil hit \$55 a barrel). CLC has won numerous awards for their work at Garrison Woods and other sites. If the decision is to proceed with the sale to CLC, we (residents of Manor Park and surrounding communities) are in for a comprehensive planning process, one that will address among other things transportation issues.

The possibilities for this land are numerous, mixed use residential/commercial, a business park, athletic parks, increased research facilities associated with NRC, a federal node focusing on science, transportation, and technology. The list goes on. However, without a plan, the land will eventually sit vacant, which, to my thinking is not such a hot idea.

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