

Press Release, for immediate release

October 20, 2014

4:30 p.m.

Markham Citizens Coalition for Responsive Government Endorses Candidates

Contact: Eileen Liasi, Director MCCRG at eileenliasi@hotmail.com

The Markham Citizens Coalition for Responsive Government (MCCRG) was founded two years ago by Markham citizens from across the City. Its primary goals were to fight against the financial arrangement to publicly fund a private arena and to increase transparency and accountability on Markham Council. The group was active in the public arena survey and was instrumental in the defeat of the project's financial arrangement, which ended the project. It continues with its work on improving transparency and accountability in the City of Markham.

The candidates chosen for MCCRG endorsement were all active in achieving the defeat of the arena and have all spoken out in favour of various ways of changing, for the better, the way Council conducts its business and relates to the people of Markham.

#### **Mayor:**

Stephen Kotyck. Kotyck was a strong opponent of the arena financial arrangement and was instrumental in showing how the figures being used to support the claimed economic benefits to the City were bogus. He has a strong business and computer technology background and believes in open government with active participation by the residents and all members of Council as well as a high level of fiscal responsibility. He would be a uniting force on a previously badly divided Council.

#### **Regional Candidates:**

Jim Jones. Jones initiated the citizens' survey regarding the proposed arena and worked with residents from across the City to draft and distribute it to every household in Markham. From the beginning he objected to the financial framework as well as the poor business track record of the proponent and was instrumental in defeating the project. He is also Markham's leading transit visionary and has a major plan to increase the efficiency and cross-municipal connectivity of our transportation system. He wants to work with the residents of Markham on various "City building" initiatives and believes strongly in team work.

Jack Heath. Heath's motion to defeat the proposed arena financial framework was passed at the marathon three night Council meeting in December, 2013. He has recently come out with an extensive, new position paper on how to increase transparency and accountability at Markham Council, advocating for an auditor general, oversight by the Ombudsman of Ontario, increased powers of the Integrity Commissioner, fewer in-camera (secret) meetings of Council, a stronger Council that works together on all major issues, and a panel of experts and residents to initiate these and other transparency initiatives.

Joe Li. Li was also one of the earliest and most consistent opponents of the financial framework that was proposed to fund the arena project. In addition, he voted in favour of City-wide funding for storm water improvements to the older parts of the City instead of having individual homeowners in those areas pay for the infrastructure upgrades. He is interested in Markham becoming a world leader in municipal waste management.

**Ward 1.** Valerie Burke: Burke was one of the first Ward Councillors to question the economic feasibility of the proposed arena scheme. She was quoted in the Toronto Star as asking "If this is such a great idea why isn't the private sector all over it?" She has also served Ward 1 for 8 years with honesty, integrity, hard work, and in cooperation with the residents on issues such as traffic infiltration, increased storm water protection and funding, protection of our green spaces, better park facilities, and bringing the subway north to Highway 7.

**Ward 2.** Jim Kwan: Kwan was a founding director of the Markham Citizens Coalition for Responsive Government and resigned in order to run for Council. He worked tirelessly to defeat the proposed financial framework that would have provided public funding for the private arena. He has also helped the residents of the Cathedraltown development in Ward 2 in their fight against the developer and the City to get the features in their subdivision that they were promised ten years ago. He believes in greater citizen participation, more open government, and greater accountability by members of Council.

**Ward 3.** Don Hamilton: Hamilton was one of the Ward Councillors who expressed concern early on about the potential high risk to the residents of Markham created by the proposed financial framework for the arena. He has also served his Ward 3 residents conscientiously over the past term and with honesty and integrity. He is a strong proponent of increased team work on Council and greater transparency in the way Council conducts its business.

**Ward 4. Karen Rea:** Rea was a founding director of the Markham Citizens Coalition for Responsive Government and resigned in order to run for Council. She has regularly attended Council and committee meetings over the past four years and made countless deputations on issues of importance to residents all across Markham. She was a leading citizen advocate for the defeat of the arena's financial arrangement, spending hundreds of hours on research and coordinating the anti-public funding movement. Rea is also a former director of the Markham Residents for Responsible Community Planning (MRRCP) and has worked diligently, and successfully, for three years to require the City to do a proper parking capacity study and find a suitable alternative location for the planned new mosque in Markham.

**Ward 5. John Egsgard:** Egsgard spoke at the Special Council meeting in December, 2013 against the use of public funding for the building of the arena, a private venture. Although he has followed local government for many years, the arena issue prompted him to stand up for his rights as a taxpayer. Because he did not agree with the way our Mayor and some members of Council were handling the arena issue he now wants to stand up for the rights of all Markham taxpayers. His election platform includes "Respecting the Taxpayers", "Trust and Accountability", and the immediate release of the secret arena reports.

**Ward 6. Gin Siow:** Siow was a participant in an Arena Forum organized by Jim Kwan and Karen Rea on January 26, 2013 at the Splendid China Mall. This forum was organized to educate residents and to defeat the arena financial framework at the upcoming Council meeting. Siow's election platform identifies the need for transparency on council as one of his top priorities. He is a local businessman with years of charitable activity in the community and is an advocate for the release of the secret arena reports and the hiring of an Auditor General for the City of Markham.

**Ward 7.** No endorsement.

**Ward 8. Miriam Ku:** Ku was a noted Markham arena opponent. She was actively involved as the media advisor of Concerned Citizens of Markham in the fight against using public dollars to build an NHL-size arena for a private developer. She was instrumental in the distribution of the City-wide arena survey that was sent to every household in Markham and is an advocate for greater accountability and transparency in government. Ku is experienced in municipal government having worked as Executive Assistant for Regional Councillor Joe Li. She was also a political journalist covering Markham for almost a decade and has a thorough understanding of City-wide issues.

Eileen Liasi, Director  
For Markham Citizens Coalition for Responsive Government (MCCRG)