



## **Condo of the Year Quarter Finalist**

**By James M. Russell**  
Newsletters et Cetera

The regulars gather before IT most every evening to chat and enjoy each other's company. Harriet Israel calls IT "my very special place." At various times throughout the day, other residents visit IT to sit and listen to the many species of birds IT attracts. No doubt about IT, the residents of Skymark 1 love their waterfall.

**KEN  
DAVIDS**  
Treasurer

**HARRIET  
ISRAEL**  
Director

**BEV  
RICHARDSON**  
Director

**BOB  
GRIFFITH**  
Vice  
President

**RON  
BARKER**  
President



Missing from  
photo is board  
member  
**ANNE PICOV**

And while a 'water feature' is an unusual amenity for a condominium, it is entirely appropriate for a building with a Don Mills Road address. You see, Don Mills Road, also once known as Don Independent Road and The Mill Road, got its name because the north-south thoroughfare was home to a multitude of saw and flour mills established near the forks of the Don River in the early 19th century. Back then the Mighty Don was the

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## **A VERY SPECIAL PLACE**

industrial heart of Toronto, just as their waterfall is the heart of Skymark 1.

Skymark 1 is nestled in the south-east corner of Finch and Don Mills Road, in what was once the City of North York. The thirty-five storey condominium building, built in 1977 by the Tridel Corporation, has two hundred and seventy-four, two bedroom suites that range from one thousand and four sq. ft. to just over two thousand two hundred sq. ft..

It was the condominium's massive suite size that sold Board Director Harriet Israel and her husband, Ralph. "Our kids thought we were crazy to give up the house we'd lived in for twenty-eight years," but once Harriet and Ralph's children visited Skymark 1 they couldn't help but be impressed by the expansive grounds, award winning landscaping, and the convenience of

not only having three major shopping areas minutes away but quick access to the 404 and 401. It was the same for the Board's Treasurer Ken Davids and his wife Sheila who bought their unit seven years ago. Ken says, "We made the right decision when we chose Skymark 1. People are friendly, and the building is very well run."

As with any condominium nearly four decades old, the resident demographics of Skymark 1's has changed significantly as original owners, many of whom were attracted to Skymark 1's 'Adult Only' rule, pass on or simply move out. Replacing them are young couples with small kids who recognize that Skymark 1 is an ideal location for raising children, partly because, "We have a lot of great parks and several top-rated schools in the area," says Ron Barker, Board President, and resident for twenty-seven years.

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Site Administrator, Angela B. Paisley and Condominium Manager, Sara Ryk



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Skymark 1 not only shares spectacular recreational facilities and well-landscaped grounds with Skymark 2 but their very active social committee, headed by Skymark 2 resident Bernice Shapiro, is made up of members from both buildings. Together they plan an extensive slate of activities that include: seasonal parties, BBQs, discussion groups, book club, casino trips, bridge, canasta, mah-jong, potluck suppers, a Canada Day celebration, and... a "Night of the Oscars"!!

Yes, the Social Committee held a pre-broadcast event on Oscar night, complete with a plush red carpet rented by the Social Committee from a local carpet store. Committee member Mel Kay even conducted Joan Rivers style red carpet interviews with the residents as they ar-

rived for the event. During the evening, 'awards' were presented to attendees for, among other things, 'Best Hair Style'.

Pictures from "Night of the Oscars" and other social events going back twenty years are kept in photo albums, available for viewing in their library. The albums are an ideal way for the Board and the Social Committee to share Skymark 1's rich history with new residents. Skymark 2's Carole Alexander heads the library. Membership is free and book borrowing operates on the honour system.

The photo album is just one of the communication vehicles available to the Skymark 1 Board. Their quarterly newsletter titled The Four Seasons is full of helpful articles, resident's profiles, poems, book

and restaurant reviews, recipes, travel tips, advertising from local businesses, and building news. The Four Seasons also provides the Board with a vehicle for informing residents about important new events and distinctions won by Skymark 1, such as their 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2006 landscaping awards.

Although you would think that it would require a dozen or more hands to accomplish the Herculean task of publishing a newsletter that is sometimes thirty pages, Ruth Fluxgold, Shenaz Tolat, Mike Shahnazar, David Froud, Editor Shirley Bar-el, and Board member Harriet Israel manage to not only publish a professional quality newsletter that meets the needs of the Board, management, and the residents but in 2014, The Four Seasons won the



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Canadian Condominium Institute's prestigious Newsletter of the Year Award.

Board President Ron Barker uses his regular column in *The Four Seasons* to write about the corporation's finances, changes in moving in and out times, energy conservation, and upcoming capital and maintenance work.

The Board also utilises paper copy notice boards on the ground floor, underground parking levels and in their four elevators, as well as drop-offs at resident's doors.

Skymark 1's Board is made up of Ron Barker, President; Bob Griffith, Vice-President; Ken Davids, Treasurer; Anne Picov, Secretary and Directors Beverley Richardson, Peter Heyland and Harriet Israel, who says "We're very hands-on," which is a good thing since the continued success of any forty-year-old property depends heavily on the good stewardship of a caring and committed Board. "The building itself is very sound but every time you turn around it's something," says Peter Heyland who also serves on Skymark 1 and 2's Shared Facilities Committee. Skymark 1's list of successfully completed work includes:

- Installing a new emergency generator. A project that took nearly a year to complete, in part because the original generator was installed in the basement, making its removal both expensive and time-consuming. Their new, high-efficiency generator rests outside on a specially constructed concrete pad
- Refurbishing their four elevators
- Repairing the underground garage's waterproof membrane
- Replacing the fan coils and motors
- Updating their Emergency Preparedness Manual
- ..... And, a 2.5 million dollar project that involved coating the entire exterior of Skymark 1 with a flexible, high-

**“Our waterfall is like a little jewel. And everyone knows that jewels, like fine wine, just get better with age.”**



Card players from left: Tillie Spears, Fila Rechtman, John Targett and Anahit Calyan

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build Elastomeric sheath designed to expand and contract, bridging hair-line cracks in the tower's vertical masonry surfaces.

With utilities consuming 35% of their operating budget, the fan coil and sheathing projects were, in part, driven by the need to conserve electricity and heat. Replacing the forty-year-old fan coils cost the individual owners approximately \$3,000 per fan coil - with some units containing three or four fan coils. During the project, the Board incurred significant 'soft costs' as they wisely hired a consulting firm familiar with Toronto Hydro rebate requirements, contracted a manager to oversee the project, and hired additional security to oversee the installers as they worked in

the suites. The fan coil project resulted in a sizeable rebate from Toronto Hydro. The sheathing project also included replacing the caulking around all of the building's windows. The work is expected to not only rein in Skymark 1's operating expenses, but also reduce the building's carbon footprint.

Skymark 1's massive projects - past and future - not only require careful fiscal management but transparency. Ever conscious of that responsibility to the residents, the Board of Skymark 1 uses AGMs and regular Town Hall Meetings to hold open and frank discussions about upcoming capital projects, management issues, maintenance, and other matters vital to the continuing success of Skymark 1.

Since new residents are always in attendance at the AGM, the individual board members also take the opportunity to speak about their respective duties and responsibilities. "We take our job very seriously," says Ken. All of the members of Skymark 1's Board, except one, have completed, or are currently taking CCI level 100 or 200 courses.

"Sara is excellent," says Board Director Beverley Richardson, who has lived at Skymark 1 for eighteen years. The 'Sara' she is referring to is Sara Ryk, Skymark 1's hard working Condominium Manager for eight of the past thirteen years.

"My work day starts at 6:15 and doesn't end until 5," says Sara, "Managing a thirty-nine-year-old building takes a lot



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**“We made the right decision when we chose Skymark 1. People are friendly, and the building is very well run.”**

of time and energy but working with our great board makes my job easier. Plus there are a lot of really nice residents. I love my job.”

Skymark 1’s cleaning, security, gatehouse staff, and landscaping are contracted out. Del Property Management employs Sara and Angela, her Assistant Site Manager, while Gary, the building’s superintendent, works directly for Skymark 1.

The Board’s commitment, not only to the residents, but also to Mother Earth has driven a series of green projects. Some of which have included:

- Completing a toilet valve replacement initiative in 2014. The more efficient valves were purchased and installed in all two hundred and seventy-four units at no cost to the individual unit owners
- Replacing all the building’s 190w sodium lamps with 50w LED units, an expensive change but one that Ken estimates will result in an operating budget savings of \$14,000 per year. That, on top of the \$7,000 rebate they received from Toronto Hydro
- Hiring an outside plumbing firm to inspect every unit’s kitchen and bathroom faucets and replace washers and cartridges when necessary

Fred Hamson’s bountiful farm has long disappeared from the intersection of Don Mills and Finch. As has the roar of the wood miller’s toothy saws, instead the residents of Skymark 1 have the soothing splash of water and the gentle music of songbirds as they dart through the leafy enclave surrounding their special place. Says Harriet, “Our waterfall is like a little jewel.”

And everyone knows that jewels, like fine wine, just get better with age... **CV**



Recreation centre attendant, Audrey Clarke (above) and superintendent, Gary Bartlett (below)

