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## TOWN COMMITS TO FUTURE OF OBSERVATORY LANDS

RICHMOND HILL – In response to the University of Toronto's recent announcement of its intention to sell the David Dunlap Observatory lands, Mayor Dave Barrow committed the Town of Richmond Hill to doing what it can to ensure that future uses of the property will benefit the community as a whole.

“Due to the importance and the large size of this unique property, Council and staff have already been in contact with the University of Toronto, and will continue to be, to deal with the many important issues that need to be considered prior to a possible sale moving forward,” said Mayor Dave Barrow.

The Observatory land covers an approximate area of 180 acres of woodlots and grassland. It is bordered by Weldrick Avenue to the north, Bayview Avenue to the east, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south and CN rail tracks to the west. Since its inception, the Observatory, which includes one of the world's largest telescopes, has been a research centre for the University of Toronto's Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics and has also carried out public education and teaching programs.

In August of this year, the University approached the Town and indicated their intentions to sell the property with the support of the Dunlap family heirs. Should the University reach a final agreement with the heirs, they will be advising the Town further.

The University plans to establish the Dunlap Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics at their main St. George Campus in downtown Toronto. To fund the project, the University has announced its intention to sell the Dunlap Observatory and the surrounding property in Richmond Hill. A vote is expected on the matter at the University's Governing Council Meeting on October 30, 2007.

“Even if their Governing Council agrees to declare the lands surplus to their academic needs and subsequently offers the lands for sale, there are many important issues regarding the property, not the least of which includes zoning, historical buildings on the site as well as all relevant tree by-laws,” said Mayor Barrow. “Over the years many considerations have been given to the University of Toronto by the Town. Our plan now is to ask the University to slow down the process, so that all necessary discussions can be had prior to any sale,” he added.

“The Town is committed to keeping residents informed of any future developments on this property. As soon as the Town has more information concerning this matter, we will update residents and provide opportunities for them to share their thoughts and/or concerns on this matter where possible,” said Mayor Barrow.

*Please see attached backgrounder for more information on the David Dunlap Observatory property.*