

## **Metro**

### **Cash for cricket grounds**

By Robyn Young

May 6, 2009

The community, also known as Rexdale, or Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown, is one of Toronto's most diverse with a high number of immigrants hailing from India, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia.

And the population struggles with socio-economic issues related to poverty, unemployment, affordable housing and education; in 2006 it was named one of Toronto's 13 priority neighbourhoods in desperate need of additional resources.

So when a plan was proposed, to create a community cricket ground, Akash Shah got involved.

Shah, who was a member of the Mayor's XI cricket team, which travelled to Surrey, England, last August to play at the Chessington Cricket Club, has played the sport since he was a youngster in India and says a cricket ground would be invaluable for his community.

"It would be fantastic, right here in this area, it's so diverse," said the well-spoken Grade 11 student. "There are so many people playing cricket here and I think this region has the most cricket teams."

The local high school, North Albion Collegiate, has five cricket teams alone and there are numerous outside clubs dedicated to the sport.

In collaboration with Toronto and Region Conservation Society, the City of Toronto and **Ward 1 Councillor Suzan Hall** have already targeted 3.7 acres of land north of Kipling and Steeles for the field in Thackeray Park.

The city has committed \$250,000 for the field, but the community needs to raise an additional \$250,000 before it gets the official go ahead.

"What we really need are some substantial donors," Hall said.

Ontario Cricket has pledged \$10,000, the group's largest contribution thus far.

Ranil Mendis of CIMA Canada (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants), has been the lead in developing the Mayor's Trophy for cricket in Toronto and the Toronto Mayor's XI-UK Tour. He says cricket facilities across the city are "sadly lacking" and a new field in Thackeray Park would be great for community.

"It can target a group of youths passionate about cricket," he said. "Encourage them to do better things with their time."

Pastor Evon Nunes of the Triumphant Church of Jesus Christ and his congregation will hold a gospel concert to fundraise for the field June 6 at the Humberwood Community Centre.

“If we get this cricket ground going, I think it’s going to be a good thing for the Etobicoke community,” Nunes said. “To try to get some of the youth off the street and to train them.”

For more information on the Community Cricket Grounds Fundraiser, visit [www.torontoparksandtrees.org/cricket.htm](http://www.torontoparksandtrees.org/cricket.htm) or call the Toronto Office of Partnership at 416-392-6123.