



ST. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association Community Meeting

Held on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Hosted on the Zoom Videoconferencing Platform

SLNA President Stewart Linton welcomed all community members and delegates to the October 2021 SLNA Community Meeting.

Update – Councillor Joe Cressy

Councillor Cressy's comments covered three areas: a city-wide perspective on the public health file, a broader overview regarding the downtown neighbourhood and a more detailed update on the specific SLNA neighbourhood.

He reminded us that it has been 648 days since COVID started and that we have finally reached a fairly optimistic place in this city. Starting off with the vaccination picture he reported that 87% of eligible Torontonians have received their first vaccination and 83% are fully vaccinated. This is an amazing result – 2.38 million Torontonians are fully vaccinated and to reach the target of 90% vaccination there are only 177,000 people to go, and half that number have already received their first shot. There is continuation of an all-out mobile targeted campaign – there were vaccination stations in subways, there were vaccination stations in 24 malls, people could get vaccinated in work places and places of worship and pop-up clinics. We are now on top amongst major cities in the world as far as our vaccination efforts are concerned. The next target is the 5 – 11 year old campaign, applications from Pfizer have been submitted to the federal government, and it will be a multi-prong effort – schools, neighbourhoods and a huge

outreach campaign geared at parents. Major preparations are in place for possible third shots as well.

As far as the broader neighbourhood in the core is concerned, the focus continues to be livability, including social infrastructure and affordability, especially around housing. There are two new community centres that are under construction. In the lower Yonge precinct, the old LCBO building, there is a 51,000 sq. ft. new city community centre under construction which will have a gym and a pool, and it is scheduled to open in 2022. There is also the community centre in the East Bay Front under construction now, approx. 25,000 sq. ft., with gym and community space, scheduled to open in 2023. There are 3 new childcare facilities that are on track, in the East Bay Front, a 72 space childcare facility will open in 2022, George Brown College just received their building permits for a 61 childcare facility is slated for that building, and in the Lower Yonge Precinct a 61 space childcare facility has been secured and will open in 2023.

Councillor Cressy also mentioned a new park under construction at York Street where the Gardiner off-ramp used to be. It is called Love Park near Queen's Quay and will open in 2022. Along the waterfront - the waterfront East LRT design work is 30% completed and is finally moving forward, and in Quayside there are four shortlisted proposals that are being reviewed right now, with a focus on affordable housing, cultural space, market housing and a new public space at Parliament Slip with a pool. It is expected that one of those proposals will be chosen and brought forward for approval.

The Esplanade and Mill Street bike lane improvement project was moved into a comprehensive safety and street improvement project and work continues. David Crombie Park – specifically the spine connecting the Park and the Distillery District - RFP for the detailed construction design will be completed this year, with the construction tender to go out in 2022, complete with a “phasing” plan since this important work needs to be done in stages.

The First Parliament site – the focus for this heritage space needs to be upheld, namely parkland, the community space, library and heritage interpretation – if the land is being expropriated it is important that any revenue from that flows back into the First Parliament site.

Next is 45 The Esplanade, the temporary homelessness hotel in our neighbourhood. The pandemic in so many ways exposed and exacerbated the existing homelessness crisis in the city. While there is a long-term effort right now to create 3,000 new permanent beds for people moving out of homelessness, we have a fundamental duty at a local level to maintain liveable communities. On-site supports are important, such as the many services available at 45 The Esplanade, but so are the off-site services. The city holds 26 hotel leases as part of their emergency response to COVID, all of them are in place and have been extended through to April. We need to build an equitable and a livable community, and it is a difficult balancing act.

Councillor Cressy announced that he will be leaving elected office at the end of this term. President Linton thanked Councillor Cressy for all he has done for this community and wished him the very best in the future.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

1. A community member commented that while he is in favour of all of the safe street initiatives he questioned the “no through traffic between Sherbourne and Princess streets initiative” which he feels marginalizes many of the drivers in the area, particularly the ones seeking access to the highways, one of the reasons he moved into this area. A petition has been sent out in this regard. Councillor Cressy responded that they are in discussion with Transportation Services staff about the situation, nothing is more challenging than redesigning streets.
2. Another question addressed the vaccination statistics. How inclusive are the vaccination statistics in regard to the island community and that specific population was included. The Public Health Monitoring Dashboard, updated twice a week for the individual neighbourhoods in order to guide the city’s more concentrated efforts in certain areas, shows that the waterfront and island communities has an average of close to 90% vaccination rate, as does the entire downtown community. There are about 5% – 6% of the population opposed to vaccines in general, but in many other cases it is not opposition, but lack of access. They need help in getting their questions answered. Additional barriers need to be broken down to give them access to their shots.
3. In response to a question regarding shelters, Councillor Cressy reported that at the start of the pandemic the city set an objective to open 40 additional sites in order to move 3,000 residents of the shelter system temporarily to comply with distancing regulations. At the same time they set a target of 3,000 new permanent homes, broken down as 1,000 modular quick construction units, 1000 supportive units with mental health supports and 1,000 through housing subsidies for people to access the private market. Just over 1,000 units have been created thus far, and the rest will be created over the next two years. We need to do more – we are on track for this specific effort, but the city deals with 8,000 homeless individuals every night.
4. Another community member asked about additional security for the residents of 45 The Esplanade specifically, and she wonders if the supports within it are sufficient inside the hotel. Councillor Cressy responded that the model that was developed for Homes First was new for the city, a wrap-around model of care. There are 12 staff on site at all times, intensive case management and housing support workers, a harm reduction

program, a pharmacy on site every day, the inner city health associates with outreach teams on mental and physical health.

5. Another community member from 115 The Esplanade reported that the city cancelled the Market Street TTC bus stop. There are 3 senior buildings that use that stop and there are wheelchairs and walkers to be considered. Councillor Cressy says this issue has been raised with TTC, his office did not know about it.
6. Another community member addressed the issue of the planned bikeway along the South side of the Esplanade which has many ramifications for the safety of this busy neighbourhood. Councillor Cressy responded that the city has received written communications in that regard and that they have been touch with Transportation Services about the issues.
7. There was a comment pertaining to the homeless issue in our neighbourhood – our local MPP Chris Glover is also part of the Homeless Advocacy Workgroup, and he could be contacted for some further input. The community member also has concerns about David Crombie Park, especially in what is now the informal dog park area. The plan is to remove 90% of the grassy area in the section now currently called the “dog park” and replace it with semi-permeable material and some kind of concrete, i.e. most of the green space would be lost (in that section of the park).

In this time of climate change this seems to be short-sighted since any kind of greenery lowers the temperature. Councillor Cressy responded that an RFP is going out for the detailed design, and there will be a number of stakeholder advisory committee and public meetings as we go along, and there will be lots of time to discuss this. They are looking to increase the green space and not reduce it, and there is plenty of opportunity for public input.

8. The next questioner mentioned that she both drives and rides a bike and she is aware of the fact that many bicyclists do not obey traffic rules and make others feel unsafe. Councillor Cressy, a bicyclist himself, agrees that this is often the case. From an infrastructure point of view we need to build safe cycling infrastructure to encourage people to cycle, and from a behaviour point of view this should be addressed with education and outreach. Safety is everybody’s business. We have to protect the pedestrians, the cyclists and the drivers, which is another infrastructure piece.

MPP Chris Glover – Overview

Ontario Place – Chris Glover shared his concern that the decisions have already made as to the three companies that will operate Ontario Place, although they are now holding public

information sessions. His biggest concern is that none of the companies are in fact from Ontario. We don't seem to have an Ontario identity, and the original idea of Ontario Place was to celebrate that identity. This is a missed opportunity as far as the needed refurbishment is concerned.

The goal of the Homeless Work group is to put pressure on the Province to address the homeless crises. In the 1990s the federal government downloaded housing onto the Provinces and in the late 1990s the Provinces downloaded it onto the cities. Between 1972 and 1976 there were 15,000 affordable housing units built per year in the City of Toronto. Since then almost nothing has been built. The homelessness crisis that we are facing is 25 years in the making. And the Fentanyl epidemic is feeding into this. We have had several kinds of drugs over the years but Fentanyl, an artificial opioid, is 10 times as strong as any other drug. If you take a hit of Fentanyl at too high a concentration you go into cardiac arrest. It is a horrific drug and it is fuelling the homelessness crisis. Mental health and addiction and health care is the jurisdiction of the provincial government and absolutely nothing has been done at the provincial level to address it. We have always had addiction epidemics but Fentanyl is at another level. 18 months into this pandemic we have people leaving in tents across the city, and across the Province and nothing has been done at the provincial level to address it. Please join the Homelessness Workgroup, Chris Glover will email a flyer to the SLNA which will be distributed. On November 3 there is a panel discussion on Fentanyl. Please email his office.

Another issue is the long-term care contracts that have been awarded to some of the worst players in long-term care. 4,000 seniors died in long-term care.

Vaccine certificates – please phone or email the office to make an appointment to get it printed for you. Card stock is available. 84% of people in the Province are double-vaccinated, Toronto Public Health and Joe Cressy have done an incredible job in guiding us through this epidemic.

There has been a press conference a couple of weeks ago on Migratory Birds and we are trying to get the building codes changed to keep the birds safe. 25 million birds per year die from this. There is a petition on Chris Glover's website if you wish to sign.

Contact us

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While our office remains closed for in-person appointments, we continue to serve you via email and phone.

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Regarding homelessness and addiction, a community member posed the question if it is possible to get to the root cause of addiction and provide help in this regard. Chris Glover responded that people need support. He belongs to a group that delivers meals to the homeless, and every person has their story, one needs to deal with the underlying psychological trauma. This issue will also be addressed at the November 3 meeting.

In introducing **Shauna Harris** Chris Glover made the point that one of the things Shauna has taught him was how to support people with compassion. Shauna and Chris Glover are the co-founders of **Spadina Fort York Community Care**. The organization was founded in March 2020 and deals primarily with homelessness, good insecurity and seniors/elder hunger. It is partnered with Seeds of Hope. They are a charitable organization, volunteer-led and they do accept donations. They offer many services, including 2 weekly food banks with a focus on providing fresh, healthy and nutritious meals. Their market style food bank model is unique in Toronto:

Friday – Seniors/Elders Food Bank at Alexandra Park Coop – 12 – 2 pm

Saturday – Seniors/Elders and vulnerable families Food Bank at St. Lawrence Market 4:30 – 6:30

Sunday – meal and grocery delivery to house-bound seniors as well as delivery to Chinese speaking seniors.

If you wish to volunteer – they are looking for drivers, Saturday at the Food Bank 4:30 – 6 pm, Sunday Food Program, making meal kits 12:30 – 2 pm, driving to encampments 2 – 3:30 p.m., or you might be interested in Volunteer phone calls. Please contact Shauna directly for any other questions. stobon@hotmail.com

Isorine Marc, Jamii

Over the years Jamii established a long-term relationship with the Pikangikum First Nation a number of years ago, and they are excited to present a Photo Exhibit featuring four photographs which will be curated by 11 young women from the Esplanade community. The

four photographers are Clayton Turtle, Maddy King, Mandi Chan Peters and Morningstar Quill. Below is the Artist Statement:

“Illuminated Perspectives” portrays Pikangikum First Nation and its spectacular beauty. The photos capture the essence of northern wildlife and the people who live there. It tells a story and opens our eyes to a place in our country that many of us didn’t know existed.

These photos are much more powerful than just a series of images. They are a statement of culture, heritage, pride, and community. 17 images will be displayed in front of the courtyard of the St. Lawrence Library, 171 Front Street East, and if all goes well, you will be able to view them from Tuesday, November 2 throughout November and December.

Approval of Motions

Two motions were tabled at the last meeting. The first one covered the role of the Delegate statement and is now CARRIED by the delegates with no objections.

The second refers to the position the SLNA has taken regarding the First Parliament site, and is now CARRIED with no objections.

Joe Mihevc – Shelter News

Joe Mihevc is joined tonight by Steve Teekens, the Executive Director of a native men’s residence called Na-Me-Res. Joe reported that the Women’s Drop-In Program located at 67 Adelaide St. East and run by the Fred Victor Mission will be moving in about 1 ½ years to 232 Carlton at Carlton and Parliament. 67 Adelaide Street is a city-owned building and it has been determined that there will be a change in use. There will be a [public meeting](#) held on Tuesday, November 2.

The building on 67 Adelaide Street East will eventually be used as an indigenous shelter for 75 men.

Steve Teekens reported that the shelter at 67 Adelaide is something that Na-Me-Res has been working on for the last 13 years, and it was part of their Strategic Plan. There will be 75 beds, and it will be pet-friendly. It is a harm-reduction shelter which will also provide health care services with a nurse on-site. They have housing supports and they were the first streets to home project in Toronto. They have been doing this work with this specific population since 1985, and they also offer affordable housing in various communities. They started their own COVID testing centre, and never closed a single day during the pandemic.

Stewart Linton provided us with the following information from today's websites:

COVID 19 – Fully Vaccinated Status

	Total Population	12+
Global	38.1%	
U.S.	57.9%	
Canada	73.52%	
Ontario	73.95%	84.1%
Toronto	74.1%	83.4%
Waterfront Communities	77.5%	83.4%

TO Life has a new production (?) starting next week, please see <https://www.tolive.com/dlt>

Suzanne Kavanagh expressed her thanks to the SLNA for leading the injunction that stopped the province's demolition of the Foundry heritage building. Two of the larger buildings will be protected. Regarding the First Parliament site master plan, we need to get Waterfront Toronto involved to provide appropriate and experienced guidance and support to Infrastructure Ontario regarding development of the FP site.

The next SLNA Community Meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 24, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.