



ST. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association Community Meeting

Held on Wednesday, July 28, 2021 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Hosted on the Zoom Videoconferencing Platform

SLNA President Stewart Linton welcomed 46 community members to the July SLNA community Meeting and opened with the meeting with a land acknowledgement that recognized our Indigenous history. This will now be standard practice for every SLNA Delegate and Community meeting and delegates and community members are welcome to participate in these acknowledgements.

SLNA Delegate News Highlight

As discussed at the previous SLNA Community meeting, every monthly meeting will include some focus on an issue or idea brought forward by a delegate to ensure that we consistently provide opportunity profile the interests and priorities of our delegates and the residents they represent.

At this meeting Delegate Peter Tomlinson from the Church/Lombard area raised an issue regarding the City of Toronto's Graffiti By-law which residents believe is not adequately being enforced in our neighbourhood. He cited the case of 82 Church, a 140 year-old building listed on the City's Heritage Register, along with a neighbouring heritage building at 80 Church. Both buildings are owned by the shell company of a development company and have not been occupied since they were acquired. After graffiti appeared on the front door of 82 Church in December Peter notified the City via 311 and they promptly notified Municipal Licensing and Standards at City Hall. Nothing happened for two months despite several reminders from 311

to MLS. In early March, a notice was posted on the front door giving the owner until March 18 to remove the graffiti. The notice stated: "If the property is not brought into compliance with the Code by March 18, 2021 we intend to carry out the work required to bring the matter into compliance and apply the cost incurred to your municipal tax bill and/or proceed with legal action." The notice has been there since March 4, giving a deadline of March 18, and nothing has happened since. Peter heard that when MLS does take action it calls on a specialized clean-up firm and charges the cost to the owner's municipal tax bill. The Graffiti Bylaw itself, The Municipal Code, Chapter 485, states: "Failure to Comply. If an owner fails to comply with the notice, the Executive Director may enter upon any land at any reasonable time for the purpose of doing the things described in the notice. Costs incurred by the City in doing the work and any ancillary costs may be recovered by adding the cost to the tax roll and collecting the costs in the same manner as taxes."

Peter suggests on behalf of the neighbourhood that a person at a senior level at the MLS be invited to come to a Delegates' Meeting to explain what the problems are in getting these problems solved. **The SLNA Board of Directors will follow-up on this suggestion.**

Toronto Shelter Network Presentation – Shafeeq Armstrong and Sa'ad Talia

Shafeeq Armstrong is the Project Lead of Toronto Shelter Network's Welcome Home Project, a one-year part-time project which aims to improve dialogue and greater understanding about homelessness in general, shelters, respites and supportive housing across Toronto. The aim of the presentation was to provide an overview of the issue of homeless within the city, discuss the important role that shelters play in supporting people experiencing homelessness, provide the opportunity to hear from someone who has experienced homeless, and speak to the importance of housing. To date they have presented to about 15 community organizations. Shafeeq also introduced Sa'ad Talia who has experienced homeless and is an advocate for making sure that everyone has access to housing. He will be sharing his story with us.

This presentation covered the causes of homelessness, the cost of homelessness, the challenges homeless people experience, the role of shelters, long-term solutions and what actions can be taken. Shafeeq presented a short clip from the organization "Invisible People", introducing Rosco, a Torontonians. Rosco spoke of his six years on the street, which included using food banks, occasional couch-surfing and panhandling to get a bit of money to stave off hunger – trying to do the best he can. He does not know what his future looks like. He answered the question of what his three priority wishes are with having his own place, keeping warm, and not having to sit out in the cold begging for money.

When people speak of homelessness they often only think of absolute homelessness - sleeping rough, on the street, in encampments or emergency shelters. However, the Parliament of

Canada also defines homelessness in two other categories – hidden, or concealed homelessness, which includes people without a place of their own, who live in their car or with friends; as well as relative homelessness which includes people who are housed but live in sub-standard shelter indoors and may be at risk of losing their homes. Many people don't realize that many people are closer to homelessness than we think. 50% of employees across Canada live paycheck to paycheck, more than a third have no emergency savings at all, and a layoff or family break-up can have dire consequences. There are also many misconceptions about homelessness which can lead to further stigmatization and poor health outcomes. Some think that supportive housing decreases property values when in fact years of research do not support this. There may also be an assumption that the homeless are dangerous and violent when in fact they are far more likely to be the victims of violence. The homeless are often blamed that it is their own fault to be in this situation when in fact it is often the result of a series of factors such as job loss, ill health, trauma/abuse and high rent costs. Another assumption is that homeless individuals are not part of the community, when in fact 70% of single adults who live in a neighbouring shelter have lived in the area or surrounding area for years.

Every night in Toronto there are approx. 8,000 individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and they are not just numbers, they are family members. Almost 2/3 of the homeless population in Toronto identify as racialized, with the largest percentage identifying as black. The average age is 41 years old. 54% identify as men, 42% as women, and the rest as transgender and other categories.

People often fall in and out of homelessness. The top three reasons people become homeless include migration, including a move from another country or inter-provincially, and often not by choice, the inability to pay rent and non-financial eviction, i.e. sale or redevelopment of a property. One in three people experienced homelessness as youth and 94% want permanent housing. Many homeless individuals experienced childhood trauma. Next there is the relationship between substance abuse, trauma and mental illness and poor mental health. The majority of homeless with mental illness do not suffer from schizophrenia, a commonly held assumption, the main mental illnesses are depression, anxiety and PTSD. Substance abuse is associated with trauma, it is a consequence of becoming homeless. Homelessness is expensive for everyone, research shows that providing people with housing saves taxpayer dollars. The average cost of homelessness is \$161,000 per person per year, due in large part to higher healthcare costs and interaction with law enforcement.

The difficulty of moving out of homelessness is best illustrated through asking ourselves some simple questions – how do we apply for a job, prepare for a job opportunity if there was no place to dress or shower? What would life be like without a home to go to at the end of the day?

The Toronto Shelter Network believes in championing the best housing options which includes working with people with lived experience, and Sa'ad Talia is an individual who has experienced homelessness and related health and mental health issues and has suffered abuse as a youth. Sa'ad considers himself Canadian and Pakistani and has worked for 20 years as an English teacher as well as pursuing other opportunities. Sa'ad stressed that safe and stable housing has allowed him to lead a productive and full life and strongly feels that the homeless are just like you and I, individuals with passions, interests and skills – they are just currently lacking a roof over their heads. People can walk a different path to housing if we support them with compassion. He feels it is neither humane nor ethical to deny the safety we expect for ourselves to others. Please treat the homeless the way you would like to be treated and make a human connection, do not marginalize people.

Shafeeq Armstrong spoke of the importance of the shelter system in Toronto which plays an integral role in supporting the homeless. 85% of people who use the shelter system stay for a month or two before leaving. Many people are able to move to various forms of permanent housing, such as rent geared to income housing, market housing or supportive housing because of the really important role shelters play in the broader homeless support system. A newly released dashboard for the month of June 2021 shows that almost 800 people exited the shelter system, with 253 moving to permanent housing. While this is good news, the number also underscores that we must do better since the number of people staying in shelters is increasing.

Shelters provide a variety of services, a place to stay and sleep, as well as meals and snacks, washrooms and showers; they can provide clients with access to harm reduction services, resume building, as well as support for specific groups such as youth and refugees. They can also provide support to find access to permanent housing when the client is ready. Shelters also connect to an engagement with the community in various ways, many also have community space for groups to host meetings and events, support local business and restaurants and work closely with community safety officers, residents' associations and BIAs. It is also important to note that there are Shelter Standards for the City of Toronto administered buildings and they provide guidelines such as including at least one bathroom that is barrier free, designated sleeping areas and mandatory shelter standards training for all staff. We have to find more sustainable long-term solutions to permanent housing rather than just relying on shelters which is a short-term solution. Steps we can take towards this goal is to educate ourselves, continue welcoming people experiencing homelessness into our communities, educating and talking to others about the problem, and supporting local homelessness services. Another important step is advocating to your local elected officials.

Please complete the following 2 minute survey if you have not already done so:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3Z5LPPH>

Stewart thanked both Shafeeq and Sa'ad for sharing both their struggles and achievements.

Homes First Update – Ryan Evershed

Much appreciation to the St. Lawrence community as Homes First has received a large number of donations from the area, and Ryan reported that they are at capacity for accepting women's clothing and suggested that the donations could be directed to the Strathcona Hotel program at 60 York Street or the Better Living Centre at the Exhibition grounds.

The Novotel Hotel (which is now being used as a shelter under Homes First's management) is at capacity with around 280 people and there have been concerns about noise. There will be an increased security staff presence during the late night hours to deal with this problem. Power washing, courtesy of the Novotel staff, will also be increased. A new addition is a pilot program for peers called the 45 The Esplanade Ambassadors. Their role is to play a welcoming role for new residents in connecting them with staff and any needed support services, interact with the security staff on a regular basis, communicate concerns, be a friendly face and generally be available for questions. They are wearing blue vests while the community safety team members wear yellow vests.

Ryan mentioned that some SLNA community members are already volunteering and there are definitely still opportunities to do so. Please contact Ryan if you have experience in running groups, presently they would welcome a musician to possibly set up a group. Ryan also briefly mentioned a new initiative where they partnered with SLNA on a project called Kits for Cause whereby money can be donated specifically for items to be purchased that will be incorporated in a welcome kits for new residents.

For questions questions/donations and volunteer enquiries please contact Ryan directly:
ryan.evershed@homesfirst.on.ca

For donations and Kits for Cause please use this link:

https://give.unityvalues.com/f1nDcc?ref=ab_09MQM8_ab_Af4JKg3n3r7Af4JKg3n3r7https://give.unityvalues.com/f1nDcc?ref=ab_09MQM8_ab_Af4JKg3n3r7Af4JKg3n3r7

In answer to an audience question, a large percentage of the current residents are staying long-term and are happy with the services provided.

Metrolinx Updates – Bismah Haq, Community Relations Specialist

A quick overview of the Ontario Line – 15.6 km and 15 stations spanning from Exhibition in the West all the way to the Science Centre in the East. The new Corktown Station (working name)

next to Berkeley and Front streets will carry 22,800 riders reaching 41,200 jobs within a comfortable 10-minute walk of the station. There will be one main station entrance building and one emergency exit building, and there will be a tunnel running between the two sides just East of Berkeley and Front.

Early work for this state of development will include demolition of existing buildings, removal of structures and asphalt, decommissioning of utilities and soil removal and/or remediation if required. This will also allow for the completion of archeological due diligence investigation, including archeological assessments in advance of future construction staging and laydown to support tunnelling and work associated with the future Corktown Station. Licensed archeologists will be on site to monitor demolition and removal of at-grade components of structures, along with indigenous field monitors. Archeological plans are to be informed by the results of archeological testing and contamination work that has been done to date.

97% of the site has moderate to high archaeological potential and more archaeological assessments will be required. The history of the site is probably known to all of us:

- Indigenous peoples
- First and Second Parliament building of Upper Canada (1795 – 1824)
- Home District Gaol (1840 – 1860)
- Consumer Gas Company (1879 – 1954)

In consultation with its partners at Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx will be working with indigenous communities, the Ontario Heritage Trust, City of Toronto, community groups and the public to develop an Interpretation and Commemoration Plan for the site. Timeline and Next Steps are as follows:

Spring/Summer 2021 – Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment begins and Draft Early Works Report for public feedback.

Fall/Winter 2021 – Archaeological investigations and early works begin.

2022 – Draft Impact Environmental Assessment Report for public feedback.

2023 – Major construction begins.

Community members once again stressed SLNA's desire to make sure that the history of First Parliament be respected in the ultimate naming of the station. SLNA is focused on heritage issues since this is where the city began. There is a two layer effort to recognize the heritage and archeological significance below ground and ultimately above ground recognition which

will be reflected in the ultimate design of the station buildings, the Museum station was cited as an example in this regard. Metrolinx stressed that they are working on a naming protocol and that Corktown is a placeholder name at this point in time. There are no fixed design ideas as yet, but there are design parameters and principles in place.

Please contact Metrolinx anytime at ontarioline@metrolinx.com or 416-202-5100

Waste Reduction Group Update – Donna Patterson

In 2019 Bruno Leps, a former SLNA Director, was instrumental in forming a Waste Reduction Group and there are 10 very active volunteers who participated in the City's Environment Day, Clean-up Day with the BIA, training with the City of Toronto on reducing waste, World Clean-up day, tabling at Canada Day, the Harvest Festival at St. Lawrence Market and also presented at one of the SLNA community meeting. Then covid hit but the Committee continued to meet on a regular basis online. The big event last year was the Donation Day at St. Lawrence Market in September of 2020. There was no convenient way for people living in the neighbourhood to donate things since the usual places were closed. We received so many donations that the Salvation Army took away 7 truckloads of donated items. Many people are not aware that the Salvation Army actually accepts items most people think are useless, such as a torn piece of clothing. They will accept textiles in poor condition.

This year the group is working on "Info Blurbs", educational items which will be sent out in the SLNA newsletter, and is working with Homes First to have updated donation lists for individuals who wish to donate to the shelter, and we are excited to be working with them on Kits For Cause, a new project, which allows individuals to donate cash which will then allow the shelter to purchase items most in demand, such as winter coats and other items in the required sizes. Here is the link for Kits for Cause:

https://give.unityvalues.com/f1nDcc?ref=ab_09MQM8_ab_Af4JKg3n3r7Af4JKg3n3r7https://give.unityvalues.com/f1nDcc?ref=ab_09MQM8_ab_Af4JKg3n3r7Af4JKg3n3r7

In 2021 we are planning a two day event called REmarket, and we are asking people to donate items such as clothing, accessories and textiles in any condition. We are also accepting electronics, school supplies, art supplies and books. There will be a Repair Café, with volunteer fixers on hand who will try to repair still usable items. The days of the event are Tuesday, August 24 and Wednesday, August 25. Clothing, textiles and electronics will be taken on both days, the Repair Café is coming on Tuesday from 12 – 3 and they will be dealing with small appliances, home electronics and housewares. On Wednesday Charlie's Freewheels will be

coming from 12 – 4. This is a youth cycling organization, they do group rides and kids are able to learn how to build a bike, how to fix a bike, how to take it apart and put it back together again, and after this learning process kids are able to take the mostly donated bikes home for their own use. They will be bringing their Mobile Repair Tent on the Wednesday, to deal with air, oil and basic adjustments. We would welcome volunteers for the event, please contact us at reduce@slna.ca. Please remember that covid regulations will still be place.

Ward 13 – Edward LaRusic

Work has again been delayed on Wellington East, and staff are now looking at Spring 2022 to restart. There are still a number of drainage issues and it does not look very attractive in general. The BIA is interested in improving the look. Please review the link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.MM35.17>

Work on the North market has been progressing below ground in the underground parking and is approx. 33% complete and will be beginning above-ground shortly with an optimistic completion date of Spring of 2022. Following that work, Market Lane Park will be undergoing revitalization. The SLNA and a number of other stakeholders have been invited to that consultation, it is an exciting project. Market Lane Park: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/improvements-expansion-redevelopment/market-lane-park-improvements/>

The SLNA is helping our office regarding Market Street, with an ultimate closure of Market Street in 2022.

Ward 10 – Tom Davidson

An update was presented to the David Crombie Park Revitalization Stakeholder group. It was a presentation on the actual timelines and the phasing strategy for the revitalization. The main chunks of the first big phase will be the blocks between Lower Sherbourne and Berkeley Street, and the block between Frederick Street and Lower Jarvis. The timeline might be the end of 2022 or early 2023, a longer timeline than anticipated. Metrolinx will be completing the rehabilitation of the Yonge Street Underpass and will be conducting a replacement and updating of the lighting. The lighting will be replaced with LED standard lighting to make it a safer passageway. More details: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/improvements-expansion-redevelopment/david-crombie-park-revitalization-design/>

Stewart Linton thanked everyone of their attendance and the meeting concluded at 9 p.m.

The next SLNA Community Meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. We will not be holding a Community Meeting during the month of August.