



Deputation to Planning and Growth Management Committee

April 10, 2014

Re: Item PG32.4 - *Eglinton Connects Planning Study – Final Directions Report*

According to the staff report, successful street level businesses are a fundamental objective for all the avenues in Toronto; we applaud Council and planning staff for recognizing the value of mixed used communities where people can live, work, shop and play. Many of the city's most successful and desirable neighbourhoods have, or are located near streets with a strong retail commercial presence. Our B.I.A. represents over 200 businesses along Eglinton Avenue, between Chaplin Crescent and Oriole Parkway, within Wards 16 and 22.

As the Crosstown LRT gets built, our B.I.A. merchants and property owners will encounter repeated threats as extended periods of disruption become the norm. Our greatest fear is that this new norm - with its ongoing construction activity, lane restrictions and parking restraints will render Eglinton as a “no-go” zone for the foreseeable future, or at least until the transformation to a complete street is finally realized. In other words, the long term vision looks great, but getting there will be costly to many of our members and a significant effort will be required to manage a successful transition.

We mention this caution simply to remind everyone involved in this process that getting to the endgame requires diligent, careful planning. In short, support through the lean years is required so that a healthy retail commercial environment still exists when the new Eglinton Avenue arrives. We have already

seen the effects on local businesses that can occur as a result of extended periods of construction – St. Clair and Roncesvalles are two obvious examples where unanticipated, drawn out construction periods had significant impacts. However, it should be noted that neither of those two examples experienced anywhere near the change that awaits us on Eglinton.

Nevertheless, The Eglinton Way B.I.A. fully supports the complete streets vision presented by the Eglinton Connects Planning Team. I personally participated in many of the consultations and was really impressed with the creative ways the team engaged the community and accommodated our many requests. We look forward to working with City staff, our elected representatives, our neighbours and other stakeholders to help achieve the ‘Complete Street’ reality planned for Eglinton Avenue.

We commend the Eglinton Connects Planning Team for the efforts that they have made in developing this report, and though we support many of its recommendations, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few.

I’ll start with **Recommendations #5 – Maintain Parking Supply and #6 – Extend Network of Rear Lanes**. For the businesses on Eglinton Avenue, parking is a major issue as they rely heavily on customers from outside our immediate area. Protecting the existing parking supply is critical to retail survival and the commitment to add additional parking in new buildings via rear lanes is welcome news. In fact, it is our hope that in addition to proposing long term arrangements, the traffic management studies mentioned in this report will also recommend strategies that address parking restraints in the short term to help us cope with the extended periods of disruption.

We are very happy to see **Recommendation #11**, as burying hydro lines was something that we supported strongly during the consultation process. However, we ask that this activity be coordinated with other construction activities so as to limit disruption to existing businesses and residents.

Finally, we also like Study Recommendation **#20 – Encourage Street-Related Retail**. As the report states; *“Street related shops, restaurants, cafes and community facilities provide services that are essential to local neighbourhoods and encourage a pedestrian culture and social engagement that are hallmarks of high-quality urban life.”* It is important to us that the City recognizes the value of storefront commercial businesses and we are pleased that your survey told you that our residential neighbours strongly support the retention of retail experiences along Eglinton.

In closing, we would like to recommend that you add an additional task to the ongoing monitoring program mentioned at the end of the report. As you measure the success of this planning exercise, we suggest that the health of the businesses along Eglinton is also an important indicator that you should track.

Therefore, we ask the City to commit to a monitoring program that tracks business activities along the avenue and also regularly reviews our collective efforts to manage construction activities in a way that minimizes the impacts on local businesses. The City learned some valuable lessons in managing the disruption along Roncesvalles, and our B.I.A. neighbours to the west, have been living through the first phase of building the Crosstown. As we all compare notes, experiences and expectations, it is worthwhile to constantly review the best practices and lessons learned during this planning transformation.

Sincerely,

MDrepaul

Monique Drepaul

Executive Director