

DEPUTATION - North York Centre - REimagining Yonge (Sheppard to Finch) Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Study

December 1, 2020 IE18.1

Firstly, I would like to thank members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee for this opportunity to write to you on this important issue.

My name is Hyunjoo Chae and I am the President of the Korean Canadian Business Association of North Toronto. We are a non-profit organization comprised of over 400 businesses, and approximately a quarter of them exist in North York. I am also a small business owner myself, with restaurants at Yonge/Sheppard and Yonge/Finch.

As a member of the KCBA, I first heard of the plans surrounding reimagining Yonge Street in 2017. It brought worry to small business owners as we learned on-street parking would be removed to make way for bike lanes and other streetscape improvements. We also concerned about the estimated 3-5 year construction timeframe and how we could survive if the heavy construction alienated the usual customers, many of whom are commuters.

Last year the KCBA researched about and joined a steering committee to form a business improvement area along Yonge street from the 401 to Finch. It was our belief with a BIA in place, the businesses could have more input into this project and offer better strategies to cope with the construction. We are happy to say that the BIA has been officially passed in council and its inaugural AGM will be held in January. The KCBA was instrumental in bringing enough community support to form this BIA, as we rallied over 60 votes in favour (approximately 40% of in-favour votes.) This initiative will greatly mitigate economic damage through a unified effort during the construction years.

Though we have had several consultations with the City staff on this matter, they have not put our additional stand-out worries at ease. Instead they have been exasperated as we navigate this global pandemic and the uncertainties for our businesses that come with it. Canvassing our members, three outstanding issues surround the REImagining Yonge proposal:

- Uncertainty surrounding locations and quantity of on-street parking on Yonge St available once complete, alternative parking on side streets will be inconvenient for customers due to long walking distance.
- Increase demand for 401 access and Yonge St usage as dense residential redevelopment north of Finch to Steeles is slated in the same construction timeframe, creating a greater risk of bottleneck effect.
- Uneven demand for wider pedestrian streets as older plazas get converted to condominiums, there are very few areas left where pedestrian walkways are narrow.

As we still understand the need to address basic infrastructure improvements and a safe pedestrian and cyclist environment, we do not support the loss of parking spots to install a bicycle path on Yonge Street. Therefore, it is important to our members that the committee reevaluate their plan to reduce Yonge street to four lanes and consider alternative plans.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter, we will be following closely the outcome of this meeting and offer our support to engage the Korean business community in North York.

Sincerely,

HyunJoo Chae
President of KCBA