

Danforth Village BIA - Deputation to EYTCC, November 10, 2015 (Agenda Item TE12.29)

12.17.1

The Danforth Village BIA was started in 2006 and is located on the Danforth between Victoria Park and Westlake Ave. The membership is made up 400 businesses and 150 property owners.

Annual budget for 2015 is \$500,000.

We are current paying \$81K per year on a 659k Streetscape Loan with the City.
A 10 year repayment schedule ending in 2023.

We made an additional \$200K payment on the loan this year with 250K earmarked for 2016.

At this rate Danforth Village BIA will be debt free by 2017, 6 years sooner than scheduled.

At the 2014 AGM we had 9 Board members (inclusive of 2 city councillors)

Many offered to join the Board at the 2014 AGM and thereafter other commitments caused departures:

- one resigned because of a investigation by the integrity commissioner for improperly endorsing Councillor Janet Davis.
- one resigned due to being ineligible
- two moved out of BIA
- one sold their business and was no longer a member
- one resigned due to health issues
- one due to business demands on spare time
- some due to frustration over Streetscape politics and meddling

Presently the Board consists of 7 active board members and 2 councillors.

Currently we have \$350k in cash reserves.

We have just completed a massive Streetscape Project.
160 Pedestrian light poles with 320 flower hoops.

The last phase of this streetscape project, 122 pedestrian light poles, was a 1 million cost shared project with city.

We paid two-thirds and the city contribution was capped at one-third, \$350K

Last year, in recognition of our efforts and accomplishments, TABIA presented us with the Award for Best Streetscape in Toronto.

This award was given because we were nominated by the BIA OFFICE!

This is not a problem BIA and our Board is highly resentful of such allegations and the proposed efforts to meddle with our governance. We have sustained enough interference and threats and mismanagement from the Office of Economic Development (the BIA office); which has now embarked upon a vendetta to punish and control our Board for not bending to their will.

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These proposals to introduce only members who will be “qualified by the Office of Economic Development” - after they are vetted and approved by that office is a euphemism for control. This control of who can join the Board and setting Board size is a transparent attempt to take over the Board and access its cash reserves.

Such a process is not in play now, nor in the past, with any other BIA in this city. This will create a precedent that will be used again and again, relegating any Board that does not blindly obey the BIA office to a status of minions. This completely undermines the concept of democracy and community involvement and simply creates future BIA Boards which will rubber-stamp and take orders and direction from the City’s bureaucrats.

There are already instances where other Boards have been subjected to meddling, by bureaucrats as well as councillors. There are cases where such meddling has resulted in factionalizing amongst the members and directors on Boards. There are cases where Board members have even engaged in physical pushing and shoving at meetings. There are cases, as in our neighbouring BIA, Mosaic BIA where outside meddling split the Board into factions and they were dysfunctional for two years, during which time, all their meetings were chaired by Michael Saunders, a field-worker who is employed by the Office of Economic Development and who works with that BIA, as well as ours.

In all these other cases, ladies and gentlemen, the Office for Economic Development made no attempt to impose on them the actions proposed to be applied to our BIA.

We are being subjected to such proposed action for reasons of political control by the bureaucracy.

We are being punished and will be enslaved by them for having the temerity to object to their incompetence and mismanagement because we are disputing some of the over-budget costs for our Streetscape Project. These extra costs evolved partly due to the ineptitude of this office for Economic Development and against which we are complaining. This is the same Streetscape project which we pioneered in terms of cost and achievement and for which we have been recognized by TABIA as being number one.

In other words, as long as we went along and kept paying, no problem. The minute we objected to excess costs and wasteful spending, we have become pariahs and must be brought into line.

I ask you to reject this attempt and this motion. At the very least, if you choose not to believe me, defer the matter until we can make a more detailed response or until you undertake further review and investigate the matter further – you are now being misinformed and misled under the guise that the bureaucrats want to “help” us. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is an out and out effort at takeover and control.

I plead with you to look into this with an enquiring and open mind. Do not believe the fiction that we are being helped. We are being punished and this is the tip of the iceberg concealing the takeover of our BIA by controlling who can serve on our Board.

We have tried to do our duty. We have acted responsibly by exercising our fiduciary responsibilities and protecting our taxpayer base. For doing so, we are now being targeted for punishment. Look into this on your own. Do your duty. Do not abrogate this matter by accepting the fiction being advanced by the bureaucracy as factual. Do some homework and you’ll agree there is an injustice here.

Louis Dapergolas
Chair, Danforth Village BIA