

Jan 6, 2021

Dear Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

I am writing today to affirm my support for the staff recommendations in item IE19.11 yongeTOMorrow - Municipal Class Environmental Assessment on Yonge Street from Queen Street to College/Carlton Street which will be discussed at the January 11th committee meeting.

The City of Toronto is mandated to replace a failing water main that is over 100 years old and buried directed under downtown Yonge Street. This will require major construction, and disruption in the area. What is being decided today is how we decide to put the road back together.

yongeTOMorrow is our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform Yonge Street into a world-class, 21 century urban destination that supports critical public health objectives - for a world with COVID-19 and beyond. yongeTOMorrow proposes a full and flexible redesign of the street from College St, south to Queen St, where sidewalks will be expanded, vehicle lanes modified, restaurant patios extensions and street furniture and streetscape elements added.

Lined with brand destination retailers, restaurants, music venues, theatres, the Eaton Centre, and Yonge Dundas Square, yongeTOMorrow is our chance to bring one of Toronto's most historic and culturally important streets back onto the world stage. In the wake of the successful ActiveTO and CafeTO initiatives, this is the moment to mobilize huge public support and think boldly about the future of this iconic city street. This is the time for Yonge TOMorrow.

As the former Executive Director of Tourism for the City of Toronto from 2002 to 2007, a former member of the Board of Directors of Tourism Toronto and in my current role as a tourism and entertainment industry business development consultant, I can say with great confidence that efforts to re-imagine the public realm like yongeTOMorrow will lead to greater destination animation.

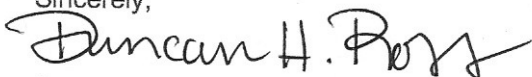
Destination animation, whether it be sidewalk cafes, public art installation, busking/street performance etc. will draw residents and visitors to the area. It is the special sauce or compelling "wow factor" that great international urban cultural destinations need to thrive. It achieves the key tourism development objective to increase visitor spending and visitation to the City and more importantly, increasing length of visit duration even if it only is measured in hours.

It is also a wonderfully opportunity to build imaginative tourism experiences. I recently discovered murals depicting Yonge Street's entertainment history on the walls of a building between McGill and Granby Street. As a tourism marketer, these, and other examples of public art installations should be integrated into a year-round self-guided walking tour which will attract cultural explorers as well as Toronto/Ontario residents looking to rediscover the city.

Downtown Yonge St is a neighbourhood's backyard and a country's Main Street. yongeTOMorrow needs to cater to both. This proposal addresses the needs of the visitor economy and of the local neighbourhood, while also strengthening the long-term economic development and success of the whole city.

I urge you to support this once in a lifetime opportunity to amplify Yonge Street's prominence as a vibrant, pedestrian-prioritized, globally significant and flexible destination street.

Sincerely,



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