

October 1, 2024

TO: Toronto Executive Committee

RE: Update on the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts Redevelopment Project

AGENDA ITEM: EX17.17

RECOMMENDATION: City Council request the Board of Directors of TO Live to direct the President and Chief Executive Officer, TO Live, in consultation with others...:

1. to proceed with the detailed design phase, in accordance with the established stage gate process as outlined in this report page 9 and page 10 entitled Stage Gate Process, and
2. to amend the 2024-2033 Capital Budget and Plan for TO Live to reallocate \$8.779 million in funding commitment from the remaining cash flow funding originally intended for state of good repair to advance the Detailed Design phase.

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of Executive Committee,

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association (SLNA) supports the continuation of the redevelopment process for the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts (STLC), which is a visionary project that promises to reshape the cultural landscape of our city. In parallel SLNA recommends that TO Live be tasked with moving quickly to substantially reduce the perceived financing risk currently attributed to the project

The St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts opened in 1970, in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood, as a centennial project for the City of Toronto. Since then, it has been an important performance space and a cornerstone of the City's cultural fabric.

Now, after more than five decades of service, the building needs more capital re-investment than typical state of good repair funding can and would normally provide. As an example, the building, today, does not meet the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Recognizing the crucial role of the STLC, TO Live launched a public consultation in 2021 to gather input from Toronto residents. Both the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association and a large number of neighbourhood residents were strong contributors to this consultation process.

The feedback from the consultation emphasized a real need for affordable, flexible, and technologically advanced multi-use spaces that can accommodate the diverse needs of our communities, especially non-profit organizations.

TO Live's ambition is to transform the STLC into Canada's first arts space that fully addresses the cultural, social, environmental, and digital needs of our time, and for future generations. The new STLC is envisioned as a hub of extreme usability, offering state-of-the-art spaces for the performing arts sector, the St. Lawrence and other local neighbourhoods, and all of Toronto's various communities, irrespective of age, culture, ability, identification, or income level.

In addition to serving the broader community, the redeveloped STLC will stand as an iconic destination for visitors, and a creative meeting place for artists of all disciplines. Emerging artists, seasoned professionals, students, educators, patrons – the STLC is being reimaged to be home to all, by nurturing creativity, fostering collaboration, and celebrating the diversity of artistic expression. The new facility will be equipped with state-of-the-art technical and digital capabilities, ensuring that it meets the rapidly evolving needs of artists and the expectations of modern audiences.

The economic and cultural vitality that the new STLC promises is unprecedented. Last year alone, over 500,000 individuals visited TO Live venues, attending more than 1,000 performances, events, and workshops.

The redevelopment of the STLC is set to magnify this impact. It is expected that the new STLC will not only attract larger audiences, but will also serve as a catalyst for regeneration, vibrancy, and economic activity in the neighborhood.

Only steps away from Union Station, the STLC is well positioned to become a cornerstone of a lively cultural district within the heart of downtown Toronto – anchoring a Cultural Corridor stretching along Front Street from Yonge Street to the Distillery District and further east.

TO Live's vision is to do more than just redevelop an arts venue; it is to create a cultural engine designed to drive tourism, stimulate economic activity and showcase Toronto as an iconic destination for arts and culture on the global stage.

The Board of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association urges the Executive Committee to continue its support of the redevelopment of the STLC; to show leadership by supporting the creation of a new and iconic cultural destination for everyone.

It is true that there are financial unknowns associated with this project. These can be characterized as insurmountable risks and used as an excuse to walk away. This is not City building. Rather, the Executive Committee should challenge TO Live to show that it can ameliorate these financial risks to a significant degree (and in a reasonable amount of time) as a condition of its continued support.

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association (SLNA), incorporated in 1983, represents over 35,000 residents living in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood of Toronto. The neighbourhood – bounded by Yonge St., Queen St. E., Parliament St. and the rail corridor to the south – is a mixed-income, ethnically diverse residential and commercial community adjoining the Central



Business District. It contains the oldest neighbourhood in the (now) City of Toronto, the *original ten blocks* of the Town of York (dating from 1793).

The SLNA Board of Directors appreciates the Executive Committee's consideration of its recommendation to continue to support the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts redevelopment project.

Sincerely,



p.p.
Board of Directors
St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association

cc: Mayor Olivia Chow

Members of Executive Committee:

Paul Ainslie	Alejandra Bravo
Shelley Carrol	Mike Colle
Paula Fletcher	Ausma Malik
Josh Matlow	Jennifer McKelvie
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