

September 26th, 2024

RE: Support for the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts (STLC)

Dear Mayor Chow and the Executive Committee,

The Old Town Toronto BIA (formerly the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA) fully supports the redevelopment plans for the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts.

The STLC is a key asset in our neighbourhood that supports bringing people back to our downtown - an initiative, particularly post – Covid that has been top of mind for our leaders in government.

The BIA looks to long term initiatives and the STLC is a major player and a primary part of our plan to revitalize the neighbourhood. Future plans include promoting the To Live theatres such as the STLC and the Meridian Hall as the dynamic gateway of the Front Street Cultural Corridor and a poignant access point to the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood and Old Town Toronto.

As the BIA finishes developing its Street Transformation strategy, the STLC is front and centre within that transformation. With the completion of the Wellington Street and Leader Lane projects, the Berczy Park precinct continues to evolve. The STLC is an amazing anchor to our neighbourhood and will offer new opportunities for residents and visitors alike to experience a new pedestrianized plaza and incredible new indoor facilities. This dovetails with our Public Realm master plan for creating destination areas and neighbourhood connectivity.

However, the time to act is now! The City can look simply to repair this facility so that it meets current codes and is in a state of good repair, or they can **build-back-better** – and use the financing allocated for such purposes as a full investment now to build this city and this neighbourhood to a future state, rather than build it to its past level of existence, which, as we have seen, no longer is as efficient as it once was. There needs to be a larger vision to transform the neighbourhood with a world class facility – and to draw program support rather than initiating the fixing of a broken building. There are other organizations watching with interest that wish to see this happen; organizations that want to partner, invest funds, and build on the financing that the city has invested in this project.

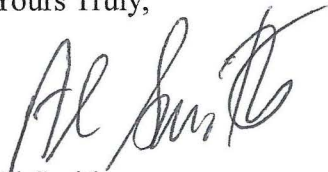
Having the vision to create this corridor, and this special facility is in keeping with the goals of City Council. This facility will be an economic boon to the community and downtown Toronto. The benefits will include creating innovative spaces, servicing community needs, creating jobs, traffic, tourism, increasing visitors, and thereby eyes on the streets, and a safer area. The spillover from a facility like this has the potential to create a hub, which may address safety and security, community engagement and programs that could address homelessness, mental health and addiction and create inclusivity for indigenous communities – all goals of our city council. The benefits also are impactful on the surrounding businesses and cultural and historic

venues, another goal of the city to create brisk business opportunities for more robust communities.

These items are not conjecture. If I drop a hammer behind my back, I need not look to know that it has fallen to the ground. The same goes for the proposed STLC facility. The BIA does not wonder IF these benefits will happen, but WHEN they will happen. We understand this from two decades of long-term planning and creating destinations that enhance a neighbourhood and create a proper life balance.

In short, the Old Town Toronto BIA advocates for a new reimagined St Lawrence Centre for the Arts. Consider looking beyond the state of good repair renovations, when we can build a world class theatre structure with amazing facilities. We ask that you look to the future rather than the past and be that catalyst the drives new changes and opportunities and makes this the liveable city we look to enjoy.

Yours Truly,



Al Smith
Executive Director
Old Town Toronto BIA