



LILY'S WEEKDAY UPDATE

Issues • Policies • Committees

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Hi Neighbour!

Magical Things Happen When We Come Together

Many thanks to the many people who joined us and supported us with the Community Environment Day and Eco Fair that happened this past Saturday. We received high praise from someone who mentioned it looked like one of the "the most amazing Community Environment Days of the year!" This could only happen with the amazing group of people who came together including volunteers from the Willowdale Climate Action Roundtable along with Professor Pricklethorn, and representatives from Point A, Smart Commute, Parkview Neighbourhood Garden, LEAF, Climate Fast, Toronto Climate Action Network (TCAN), Green Neighbours Network (GNN), ECO Spark, Willowdale Neighbourhood Planting Program, Cycle TO and Our Greenway.

It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces and I truly believe that getting together is how the magic of community happens! Upon arrival in the morning, I met a couple who are creating a comedy show to present, and just as we were chatting, **Steve Boyle**, the founder of the **Willowdale Central Arts Collective** appeared and a serendipitous connection was made! I was also deeply moved by Mary, the 95-year-old who took a bus to Earl Haig because she wanted to meet me. As we chatted we discovered another Mary who was 72 and waiting beside her to speak to me. 95-year-old Mary told 72-year-old Mary, "You're so young!" It was a special moment for me!

Speaking of Connectivity - Spaghetti Town Halls Happening Soon!

We have 3 opportunities to come together in the coming weeks for neighbours in **Avondale (THIS THURSDAY NIGHT)**, **Newtonbrook West (NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT)** and **West Lansing - May 7**. Please do join us as we build connectivity and democratic engagement in our community. It's a chance to share your dreams for our community and meet others with whom we can collaborate to make our dreams a reality! Our goal is also to have some fun while we share a spaghetti dinner together! [Click Here](#) to RSVP.

Building Bridges or Setting Fires?

In these contentious and polarized times, many people want their leaders to make statements, to call things out and take a stand. These statements are usually black and white and draw very clear lines in the sand. I believe leadership by statement is a construct of social media. Before this era of connectivity, we did not have the same proximity or line of sight to our leaders. Certainly before computers were invented, the evening news was the main source of information. I do not believe leaders were making statements on a daily basis as on-air minutes were carefully allocated to main priorities. The work of leaders in those historical times was not to influence public opinion on a daily basis.

Over the past few weeks I have had constituents reach out to me, disappointed or pleased that I have not made certain statements in support or against certain groups. As I ponder my role, and the very limited powers accorded to a City Councillor, I do not think leadership through statements is an effective use of the platform I have been given.

Many years ago, my husband and I attended a parenting class by author and child and family therapist **Jennifer Kolari**. I believe the lesson we learned applies to parenting, marriage, leadership, management, team-building and much more. Put simply, we must "**connect before we direct**." When we make judgments via statements, we are disconnecting from the people we are judging. By doing so, we lose the opportunity to work collaboratively towards the changes we wish to see. It is difficult when issues are deeply personal. We want our leaders to stand with us and decry the injustices we see. However, if doing so neuters our opportunity to bring about change - what good can we achieve by making sweeping statements? Certainly a City Councillor has very little weight in influencing the foreign policy of other governments. As with life and policy, there is never only one side of the story. A statement cannot easily capture the nuances and layers that exist in any contentious issue.

And so, after much thought and with recent experiences, I feel the leadership I aspire to live out is one that builds bridges, relationships and collaboration. I will always make time to listen to the different sides of any issue. However, I will refrain from making sweeping statements as I do not believe it will help me achieve the best outcomes for our community. Politics and the overall temperature of society can benefit if we focus on building bridges rather than burning them.

A New Provincial Bill has Arrived

Whenever I meet with residents who are trying to challenge a new development, they are shocked to discover their voices have very little sway in the process. With the 90-day development application window, the speed with which these applications have to happen is so fast, it is hard for residents to digest and respond. As many of you may know, I too am frustrated with the lack of opportunities for residents to provide meaningful feedback as our ideas are often overridden by policies that expedite the building application process but decrease the potential quality of life on the other side. For example, a 44-storey tower with only 7 visitor parking spaces and no public parking spaces nearby, means there will be an inevitable impact on nearby residential streets which could lead to the inevitable implementation of permitted street parking which has thus far not been welcomed in our community. In the name of "Housing Crisis," city staff are approving things that will have questionable future impacts on our community.

This is the context with which a new Bill has arrived: [Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024](#). City staff along with a member of my staff team is reading through this Bill and will be reporting back in the coming weeks on the impact of this Bill. Based on the name of the Bill, I suspect the voices of residents will be further reduced to expedite construction. [Click Here](#) to read our summary of the impacts of [Bill 23](#) and [Bill 109](#).

A visit to 415 Willowdale Ave.

Many people in Willowdale are surprised to know there is a Toronto Community Housing Neighbourhood in our community. While it is true that most of the households live below the poverty line which comes with many challenges, they are also rich in community. During my various community roles over the years, I have regularly facilitated several BBQ events. It was at one of these BBQs that I ran into a mom with her newborn. She really wanted me to meet and hold her new baby, but it took quite some time for me to do this because so many people in the community wanted to hold the baby too! This struck me as so beautiful, and also so different from other neighbourhoods in Willowdale. Generally, new moms are very protective of their newborns and don't have the large village around them where they would feel safe passing their baby around! Over the years, I have realized there is much we can learn from our neighbours in this area.

Last week I had the chance to do a site visit at 415 Willowdale along with TCHC and city staff to talk about the opportunity to bring swimming lessons to the community. Although there is a swimming pool on site, I have seen over the years that most of the kids wear lifejackets and play in the water under the supervision of a lifeguard. It has always been a dream of mine that kids in the community would learn this important life skill. I have also heard that NeighbourLink North York has a similar dream. I'm excited that this dream is now closer to becoming a reality!

Happy 30th Anniversary to NeighbourLink North York

This year NeighbourLink North York celebrates 30 years of serving Willowdale. Originally launched by a community member in partnership with World Vision, the charity became independent later on when World Vision decided to focus on their global work. As someone who played a role in the resuscitation of the charity during the pandemic, it was so encouraging to see the incredible work that is being done by only 6 people on staff along with 500 volunteers! It is truly a picture of the community coming together and building an ecosystem of care. Here is a list of the amazing work they do:

Community Care

- 415 Food Hub
- Mobile Food Support
- Children and Youth Programs for under-resourced communities
- Fresh Vegetable Support over the summer (from Zawadi Farms, sponsored by Peoples Church)
- Youth Mobilization Network - leadership development for youth in our community
- Community Care - offering systems navigation and support for community members
- [Single Mom's Mother's Day Celebration](#) (You can sign up to sponsor a single mom to enjoy Mother's Day)

Community Connectivity

- Taste of North York
- We Love Willowdale Christmas Market & Walking Parade
- Meet Your Neighbour Week
- Willowdale Yard Sale Day
- [Let's Move Willowdale](#) (A great local move-a-thon that supports North York Seniors Centre and NeighbourLink North York!)

What moved me the most at the 30-year celebration was the sharing by [Jordan Dover](#), the youth worker at NeighbourLink North York. He described how he had earned the trust of the youth who now attend weekly drop-ins run by the Salvation Army and Peoples Church. They want to be with him and are upset when he cannot make it. Jordan used to be a professional soccer player and has a masters degree. He has declined better paying jobs because he is so committed to the young people with whom he has built a relationship.

Many years ago, I hosted a basketball drop-in for the youth at 415 Willowdale. We provided food, gym time and discussions about life. However, I always felt completely inadequate for the job. I could not connect with the young people in a relatable way. It means so much that the community now has Jordan, who is a great mentor. Hearing about the friendships he has built with the young people brought tears to my eyes. It has also brought encouragement to the moms in the community - knowing where their kids are hanging out on Friday nights!

Please consider joining [Let's Move Willowdale on May 4](#). It is a fun Move-a-thon along the hydro corridor from Hendon Park followed by a community BBQ with local performances. It will be a fun event that supports this important work in our neighbourhood.

Council tomorrow!

[Click Here](#) to read tomorrow's council agenda.

You may be interested in tracking with the discussions on the following:

- Alcohol in Parks Pilot: Evaluation Findings
- The Implementation of the Vacant Home Tax in 2024/Fixing the Vacant Home Tax/Improving the Vacant Home Tax for Seniors
- RentSafeTO Program Update
- Short-Term Rental By-Law Implementation Update. If you have thoughts about this policy - please fill out our survey: <https://bit.ly/WillowdaleSTRsurvey>
- 26-38 Hounslow Ave. with amendments
- 18-28 Athabaska Ave. with amendments
- 461 Sheppard Ave. East with amendments

We are working on motions to walk on pertaining to the following:

- Allocation of section 37 money for the Yonge Street Tragedy Memorial
- Amendment to Official Plan to include consultation of faith communities
- Support Ukrainian students in their request to the Provincial Government for International Tuition Exemption for Post-Secondary Education (their unique status from the Federal government means they are not refugees and have therefore had to pay international tuition which means many students have stopped their studies due to the high cost.) Please consider supporting their request by signing this petition: chng.it/sBFYfwTVX9

Those of you who live in Avondale - I hope to see you at [Thursday night's Spaghetti Town Hall!](#)

Warmest Regards,

Lily Cheng 陳伶俐
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LET'S CONNECT ON SOCIAL



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