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Hi Neighbour!

Happy Yalda to those who are celebrating today! Yalda is a Persian celebration marking the longest night of the year, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. Best wishes for a joyous and festive Yalda night!

I also want to say **"Merry Christmas!"** to all who will be celebrating this weekend. For Christians the idea that an all-powerful God would choose to join humanity as a vulnerable baby born in a lowly stable is a reminder that we are each loved and precious.

Please consider visiting **Holiday in the Square** before it closes on the **evening of Dec. 23rd**. We have been grateful they chose our neighbourhood and brought some fun, shopping opportunities and delicious food!

Service Excellence Committee Launches

I was grateful to be asked by our mayor to join the Service Excellence Committee which launched this past Monday. The purpose of the committee is to work with the Customer Experience Division to leverage our 311 data to improve city services. Due to the money saved when people choose to use the online app or portal, I suggested more budget be allocated to promoting the online portals to encourage people to choose the app over making a call. I also made some suggestions on how to improve the app. I look forward to working with Councillors Holyday, Ainslie, and Perks to improve how we serve our residents. I also hope there is further opportunity to make 311 an empowerment portal where ideas can be shared and explored, not just a channel for making complaints. We need empowered citizens to strengthen democratic engagement!

A Walk with the BIA

As we await the launch of the design process for ReImagine Yonge, the Yonge North York BIA has launched a consultative process to come up with ideas for a public realm design. This week board members took a walk with consultants along our main strip. We discussed the lack of engaging seating areas - in particular at the Hullmark. We also noticed dead zones that are created when banks, pharmacies, doctor's offices, loading entrances and lobbies take up real estate on the ground floor. There is so much more vibrancy when there is retail and dining on ground floor, whereas health care offices, pharmacies and banks should be encouraged to inhabit upper floors OR perhaps we can figure out how banks can be designed as some sort of hub as well. I look forward to further discussions and ideation towards a beautiful future for our community that can work in synchronicity with the implementation of ReImagine Yonge.

Work at Yonge/Finch Station Continues

Our newly struck taskforce met this week to discuss data that has been discovered as well as developing a workflow to ensure the right resources are deployed at the right time. I also took a visit to the area in question and chatted with the convenience store owner who operates in the VIVA bus terminal along with the cleaner. Here is what I learned:

- There is a revolving group of people who seek warmth in the station - especially on cold days and late at night
- The people usually scatter when any type of city staff or security arrives only to return a few hours later
- The convenience store owner regularly deals with shoplifting - to the point that his front facing shelves are now kept empty. We encouraged him to call the non-emergency police line and report every incident - even if police do not show up immediately. Every call results in data that helps shape resourcing decisions!
- The cleaner said someone damaged the bathroom which is now kept permanently closed.

We have a multi-faceted approach that includes:

- Regular patrols by police officer. From what I can gather, police take a very light touch approach and lean on other agencies to send support as needed.
- Streets To Homes to dispatch teams on a regular basis
- City to deploy multi-disciplinary outreach teams (MDOT) while acknowledging that not all people we reach out to accept help.

We will reconvene our task force in the new year. We will also be inviting Metrolinx to the table to discuss their assets at this location. In the meantime, please continue to report any incidents to ensure we capture all the data which will help us send the right resources to this location.

The Fight for Cummer Continues

As the city prepares to send our letter and business case to the province to build Cummer Station, we need to continue to amplify this much needed investment infrastructure for our future. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to sign our petition and please also share it with neighbours and friends!

I know some people are reluctant to ask for such a large financial investment with so many budgetary pressures. However, in addition to the business case which you can [READ HERE](#) - I ask you please consider:

- The province and city continue to develop transit assets - at great cost - across the city. We all know developing higher order transit is the best way to alleviate traffic and make our city easier to navigate. We are simply asking for a logical investment that is much needed considering the Ontario Land Tribunal passed much density at this intersection due to the planned Cummer Station. We got backed into a corner and then they pulled the rug out from under us.
- The tunnel boring machines will already be there - disrupting our neighbourhood without the benefit of bringing accessibility and vibrancy to the area.

Toronto Police Budget

After last week's marathon Council, I admit I was not looking forward to the Police Board Meeting that happened on Tuesday from 9am-7:30pm. I am grateful to the many people who took time out of their busy schedules to make a deputation. Some people spoke about the importance of investing in poverty alleviation to increase safety, while others spoke to a marked decline in the feeling of safety. At the end of the meeting, we unanimously voted to pass the requested budget - however, this will not be the final decision. The budget must now go to City Council where the final decision will be made. [CLICK HERE](#) to see the slide deck on the proposed budget.

The need for investment

During the past year I have gotten to know many police officers, including a ride along I attended with 32 Division. I can sense the fatigue and the stretching of human resources. Officers often delay taking vacation or time off due to staffing shortages. Time and again there is a repeated message - we do not have enough officers. We get regular complaints from constituents on the lack of visible presence of police in the neighbourhood in addition to lack of consistent traffic enforcement. We also see that organized crime is going up with auto thefts, carjackings and the brazenness of thieves that rob retail outlets.

While the population continues to grow at a staggering pace - the number of police officers has not. Even as we attempt to stretch our budget to meet the requested increase - it will only garner a growth of 1 officer per 100,000. In 2019 the Officer to 100K population ratio was 167. This is expected to reach 168 in 2024 due to the investment made last year and this year. It seems at this point, we are simply treading water.

The challenge of policing in Toronto

Toronto has unique challenges as the largest city in Canada including:

- 22% of Human Trafficking in Canada happens in Toronto
- Gun and gang activity because Toronto is a large urban hub
- 3.6K events/protests in 2023, only Canadian MLB & NBA teams
- 87 out of 108 consular offices in Ontario are located in Toronto
- In addition to 630 sq. km of land, TPS also serves 1,190 sq. km of open water
- Dense cities have longer response times and greater challenges in capturing criminals

All of these added responsibilities add to the need for the city to have sustainable revenue tools beyond property taxes. As contributors of 20% of the national GDP, we should be able to support the complex needs of our city - including the many services that have been downloaded to the city over the years including social housing.

One deputation was made by **former City of Toronto Mayor John Sewell** who made several interesting suggestions including:

- Reducing use of officers for policing public events and traffic & congestion

- Allow police to patrol alone at night for specific situations (which is currently rarely allowed). This would grow policing capacity.

I tried to move some motions to further examine these suggestions. Unfortunately, despite having the support of Deputy Mayor Morley and Councillor Burnside, we lost the vote 4:3. This was frustrating for me as my motions were data requests and not asking for operational changes. I am still smarting from this loss.

Holiday Message

How beautiful that in recent weeks we have celebrated Diwali, Hanukkah, and now Yalda and Christmas. Each carrying a message of light over darkness. Let us all choose to be carriers of light together, for our family, for our neighbours and for our city.

Happy Holidays to all and Happy New Year!

Warmest Regards,

Lily Cheng 陳伶俐
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Councillor Lily Cheng

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Click On The Links Below or Scroll Down To Learn More About:

~ COUNCILLOR UPDATES

- [Eight For Cummer Station](#)
- [Skate Party 2024](#)

~ CITY OF TORONTO UPDATES

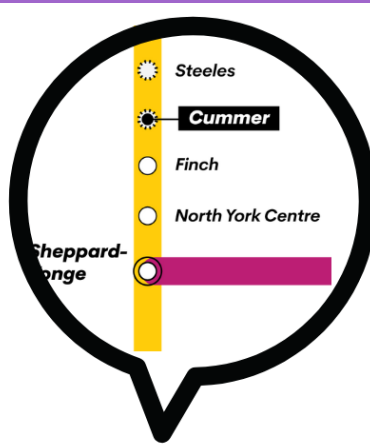
- [Youth in Policing Initiative 2024 Summer Program](#)
- [4700 Bathurst Street - City Planning Consultations](#)
- [Vacant Home Tax](#)
- [North York at the Centre](#)

~ COMMUNITY EVENTS ACROSS WILLOWDALE

- [Holiday Fair Supporting Epilepsy Toronto](#)
- [Legend of Huli](#)

COUNCILLOR UPDATES

FIGHT FOR CUMMER STATION



Build Cummer Station for 13,800 people & 5,700 jobs by 2051!



Help us fight for the future! Mayor Chow, councillors and community organizations are sending a joint letter to Premier Ford to fully fund Cummer Station. **WE NEED YOUR HELP** to sign our petition before the RFP closes leaving Cummer Station on the **Yonge North Subway Extension** chopping block. [CLICK HERE](#) to add your name and ask the Province of Ontario to BUILD CUMMER STATION!

[Sign The Petition](#)

LOCAL FIGURE SKATERS • HOT CHOCOLATE & TREATS

LAUNCH THE NEW YEAR WITH NEIGHBOURS!

WILLOWDALE SKATE PARTY

Sun. January 14, 2024, 1-4pm
MEL LASTMAN SQUARE

The time has come for our **2nd Annual Willowdale Skate Party** at **Mel Lastman Square**! Join us for a wonderful time of experiencing community on and off the rink on **Sunday January 14, 2024 from 1PM - 4PM**.

Kick off 2024 with us as we skate with family, friends, and neighbours, enjoy jaw-opening ice skating performances and a fun interactive DJ, and warm up with hot chocolate and cup noodles in support of NeighbourLink North York.

This is a **free event** sponsored by **Tim Hortons** and **Yonge North York BIA**, and brought to you by **Councillor Lily Cheng, MP Ali Ehsassi** and **MPP Stan Cho**. Free rentals made available by the Skate Lending Library.

See you at the rink!

[RSVP](#)

CITY OF TORONTO UPDATES

CITY OF TORONTO WINTER PROGRAM UPDATE

The City of Toronto is excited to start our Winter Programs on **January 8, 2024**. You can [CLICK HERE](#) for the listings for all three community centres, which outline programs that still have space for registration. Residents can call (416)396-7378 to register for programs, or use [E-Fun](#) on the city website.

[Register Now](#)

WE'RE HIRING

2024 SUMMER PROGRAM

Youth in Policing Students

\$ 16.55 per hour
35 hours per week

July 2, 2024 to August 23, 2024

Are you eligible?

- Must be legally eligible to work in Canada
- Must be successful through employment security clearance process
- Family of current/retired TPS members are ineligible to apply
- Must be a student between 15 to 18 years old
- Must be attending school full-time
- Must not have participated in any YIPI program
- Must permanently reside in the city of Toronto

Apply Now! tps.ca/careers

For more information visit:

- @YouthinPolicing
- facebook.com/tpsyouthinpolicing
- YIPI@TorontoPolice.on.ca

YOUTH IN POLICING INITIATIVE 2024 SUMMER PROGRAM

Exciting news for Toronto's youth! The Toronto Police Service invites talented individuals aged 15 to 18 residing in the city to apply for the Youth in Policing Initiative 2024 Summer Program. This unique opportunity, funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, bridges the gap between the community and law enforcement. By joining this initiative, you'll not only enhance your skill set but also contribute to fostering a stronger, more connected community. Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to make a difference! Apply now and be a part of building a safer and more united Toronto. Your journey with the Toronto Police Service awaits!

Application Deadline: January 21, 2024

[Apply Now](#)

4700 BATHURST STREET - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETING

Get ready to make a real impact on the future of our beloved city! On **January 16, 2024**, join us for a pivotal Community Consultation Meeting regarding a planning application at **4700 Bathurst Street**. Your insights and opinions are crucial as we work together to enhance Toronto's landscape, atmosphere, mobility, and opportunities for all residents. This is your chance to be heard! Share your thoughts, aspirations, and concerns at the upcoming meeting. Let's collaboratively build a Toronto that reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of our community.

[Learn More](#)

VACANT HOME TAX

In Toronto, owners of residential properties must declare their occupancy status annually, even if they live there. The Vacant Home Tax (VHT) applies to properties not serving as the principal residence, occupied by tenants, or eligible for exemptions for six months or more in a calendar year. Access the online portal for declarations now; the deadline is **February 29, 2024**.

[Learn More](#)



**“ NORTH YORK AT THE CENTRE
SECONDARY PLAN REVIEW**

Share your thoughts on:

- Parks
- Community Centres
- Density
- Amenities
- ...and more!



**★★★★★
IMPORTANT SURVEY!**

COUNCILLOR CHENG

Your voice matters in shaping the future of North York Centre(Yonge Street from 401 to Cummer)! Join the community in imagining the future of our vibrant neighborhood by completing the [online Visioning Survey and Community Mapping Exercise](#). Share your thoughts on what makes North York Centre special and what you'd like to see in the future! The survey is open until **December 31st, 2023** – your input makes a difference!

[CLICK HERE](#) to take the survey.

[Learn More](#)

COMMUNITY UPDATES

WINTER BUS STOP UPDATE

As winter approaches, we would like to provide you with an update on our [Severe Winter Weather plan](#). Fifty-six bus stops are being updated in various locations across the city with new permanent winter weather information signs indicating that the stop may be taken out of service during snow and freezing rain storms. These stops are located in known trouble spots such as hills or areas that make it difficult for a bus to travel during heavy snow and freezing rain. Here is the list of stops that will be affected in our ward:

Route	Stop #	Location
42 Cummer	Stop #1803	Cummer Ave at Bayview Ave
53 Steeles East	Stop #8225	Steeles Ave East at Henderson Ave
353 Steeles East Night Bus	Stop #8225	Steeles Ave East at Henderson Ave

[Learn More](#)

REPORTING POWER OUTAGES

For residents experiencing power outages, reach out directly to Toronto Hydro at power_quality@torontohydro.com and provide them with their address so that they are able to determine the feeder that your home is serviced from to better address the issue. You can also call **416-542-8000 (press 6)** from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to report the outage.



LEE LIFESON ART PARK EXPANSION

We are glad to announce that the expansion project at **Lee Lifeson Art Park** has been **completed**. Please note that the temporary fences would have to remain until the end of winter to ensure protection of the newly sodded area.

JOIN US FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

HOLIDAY FAIR
mel lastman
SQUARE
Supporting Epilepsy Toronto

DEC 1 - DEC 23

Fairinthesquare.ca

The most wonderful time of the year is just around the corner, and Epilepsy Toronto is thrilled to invite you to the spectacular Holiday Fair in The Square, right here in our community! The event promises to be the most enchanting holiday event in North York.

What to Expect: Winter Wonderland, Santa's Village, 65+ Artisans, Polar Point Bar, Holiday Midway, Roaming Performers, Fireside Lounge.

[Learn More](#)



'The Legend of Huli' is coming to the Meridian Arts Centre on **January 20 and 21!** Willowdaler and producer Nina Zaslavsky and Artistic Director Roman Smirnov presents a mythical story of the east-asian celestial fox portrayed by world class performers from China and Ukraine. Experience a fusion of contemporary dance, light show and music ranging from baroque to flamenco, jazz, world and modern classics.

Get your tickets now!

Promo code FOX24 gives 15% off till December 24, 2023!

[Get Tickets](#)



CALL OUT FOR COATS...AND HATS AND SWEATERS AND WARM BOOTS- ESPECIALLY LARGER SIZES FOR MEN

Every Wednesday, Cummer Avenue United Church Drop Inn offers a hot meal, a shower, and when possible, fresh clothing to a significant number of our un-housed neighbours, many of whom are from already under-served, marginalized, or vulnerable populations.



These friends need our help to stay warm this winter, so we're asking Willowdale to donate clean, warm clothing, blankets, and sleeping bags in good condition for distribution through the Drop Inn. Sweaters, hats, scarves, ski pants, and gloves/mitts are also welcome. **New unwrapped socks and underwear** are also in very high demand, as are hand-warmers.

Items can be dropped off at Cummer Avenue United Church (53 Cummer Avenue) any Wednesday between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Parking is available on the west side of the building and a sign will guide you to the Drop Inn. 😊

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