

The Rotary Club of Toronto – Forest Hill

I am delighted to have this opportunity to talk to you about the Yonge-Bloor-Bay Business Association, which I will refer to as the YBB. The Rotary Club has been a YBB member since September 2003 and we thank you for your continued support.

I hope you will find this informative. We welcome new members and I would be pleased to discuss the benefits of becoming part of the YBB Community.

Mr. Nick Vesely the Association's President and Mr. Douglas Jure, a Vice- President and YBB's political voice — also Chair of the Bloor-Yorkville Business Improvement Area (BIA) — extend their regrets at not being able to attend.

The YBB, founded in 1920, represents the rights and interests of the businesses in the area before all legislative bodies, and advances the development of the district as a desirable shopping, business, professional, commercial and residential area. The active Directors of the Board, who meet 6 times a year, govern the Association.

Our membership comprises of professionals, businesses, retailers, offices, land and building owners and residents who have worked together for almost 90 years to ensure our Community remains vibrant and strong.

The YBB, a not-for-profit organization, launched the development and implementation of the Bloor-Yorkville Business Improvement Area (BIA) in 1984. Financed through property tax dollars, the BIA's first resolve was to provide new lamp standards, paving and planting. The BIA's mandate grew to include the promotion of the Community through special events, such as the very successful annual Sante Wine Festival in May; the upcoming Cavalcade of Lights from November 17 – January 2008; and more recently its involvement in a number of citywide initiatives including the second Nuit Blanche in Yorkville.

A new and separate BIA has been formed for the transformation of Bloor Street between Avenue Road and Church Street. Presently underway and causing some inconvenience, is the upgrade of the water main located in the roadway on Bloor between Avenue Road and Bay Street. This work will continue along Bloor to Church Street until April 2008. The transformation of Bloor Street will be phased over 2008 and 2009 with a corridor that will be reshaped with widened sidewalks, cutting edge architecture, lush landscaping and strategically placed exquisite works of art.

Often businesses are not aware that the Yonge-Bloor-Bay Business Association and the Bloor-Yorkville BIA operate independently with different objectives and priorities. The YBB is the lobbying arm for the community. The BIA supports and encourages the businesses to increase their effectiveness and their contribution to the economic and social well-being of the community. The YBB relies on membership fees and fund-raising events, thus their limited resources, while the BIA's revenues are generated through tax levies. All YBB committee members, including the President, volunteer their valuable time.

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The YBB has five active committees that meet monthly:

1. Government Affairs & Small Business
2. Marketing / Membership
3. Police Liaison & Safety
4. Annual Fund Raiser
5. Finance

A brief overview of each committee will give you insight into their objectives and priorities.

Mr. Douglas Jure, President of Douglas Jure & Associates and Associate of The Devon Group, is the Chair of the YBB's **Government Affairs & Small Business Committee**. Mr. Jure is also a member of the **Customer Service Committee** and the **Information and Communications Standards Development Committee**, two of the five committees established by the Ontario Government to set standards, which are and will be used to write the Act's regulations under the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**. These committees are composed of the Private Sector, Disabled Community, and Provincial and Municipal Government representatives. On the Customer Service Committee, Mr. Jure represents **TABIA**, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, and on the Information and Communications Committee, Mr. Jure represents the Bloor-Yorkville BIA. Mr. Jure is also a member of the Board of Directors of **MPAC**, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation.

As a result of Mr. Jure's ties, the YBB stays abreast of current property tax issues and corresponds directly with all levels of Government in an effort to assist YBB members in identifying and addressing issues that affect the Community. The committee has a presence at all Municipal meetings and members are informed of issues that impact the area. In addition, the Committee also liaises with the appropriate City Hall representatives.

Recent commitments include:

Neighbourhood Commercial Property Taxation and Property Assessment

The YBB's task force continues to advocate for the creation of a neighbourhood commercial property class to protect three-storey, street-front commercial properties from excessive property taxation.

Disabled Parking

The Ministry of Transportation is tightening rules and restoring integrity to the system with respect to disabled parking permits in Ontario where there is considerable abuse. The Committee made a proposal that the by-laws be rewritten to restrict disabled parking to three hours which was supported by Councillor Heaps who is the Chair of the Disabled Committee at City Hall.

Other issues include:

Zoning by-laws and building permits

Urban renewal (the Bloor Street Transformation project)

Cleanliness/Visual Pollution: newspapers, posterage and street standards.

The Government Affairs & Small Business Committee hosts several **Issues Breakfasts** each year. An Issues Breakfast is scheduled for Wednesday Nov 12 at 7:30 a.m. at the Sutton Place Hotel where a representative from MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, will be present to discuss multiple regression analysis and how the system works. Past guests have included: Rick Jennings, Assistant Deputy Minister of Energy; Mayor David Miller; and Councillor Kyle Rae.

Mr. Jure's report on Critical Issues can be viewed on the YBB website: www.ybba.org

Ms Denise Wilson, a Senior Branch Manager with Royal Bank, is the Chair of **the Marketing / Membership Committee** and also a Director and Vice-President of the YBB. The Committee establishes and implements a strategy to retain and expand YBB membership, and develop membership benefits. It maintains effective communication with the businesses and residents in the area through the website, e-mail and e-bulletins. The YBB website is continually updated by our Webmaster and Creative Director, Ms Margaret Torrance, President of MVJ Group Inc. Due to new YBB initiatives, we are seeing a consistent increase in visits to the website. The committee has recently introduced a 'Member to Member Programme', 'Member Advertising' and 'Member Special Time Limited Offers' opportunities to benefit and build the YBB community.

Mr. Robert Kennedy, Made-to-measure Manager, Harry Rosen is the Chair of the **Police Liaison & Safety Committee** and also a Director and Vice-President of the YBB. Mr. Kennedy is also a Director of the Bloor-Yorkville BIA Board. The committee's objective is to increase awareness amongst business members of the importance of safety and security matters. The Committee addresses common and specific concerns affecting the YBB community and informs members of issues and policing initiatives. Police officers representing 51, 52 and 53 Divisions are active Committee members and have significantly strengthened the YBB community with the Toronto Police.

Some key issues are:

Aggressive Panhandlers

Social Services have completed a study to assess the needs of the panhandlers. A report will be available in January/February 2008. In the interim, with the assistance of TABIA the Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration has compiled a pamphlet identifying some of these needs, which it has distributed to businesses and residents in the area.

Illegal Vending

At a recent meeting a representative from Municipal Licensing and Standards was present to discuss 'how to deal with illegal vending in the Yorkville area mainly during the evenings and on weekends'. It was suggested their enforcement officers work closer together with the Toronto Police. Municipal Licensing and Standards agreed and is moving towards increasing their number of enforcement officers to deal with this issue in the Spring of 2008.

Ms Miriam Blumenfeld, the Senior Property Manager at Hazelton Lanes is the Chair of the **Annual Fund Raiser Committee** and also a Director of the YBB. Ms Blumenfeld recently joined the Board of Directors of the Bloor-Yorkville BIA, where she is also the Co-Chair of the BIA Promotion & Communications Committee. The Annual Fund Raiser Committee organizes events to increase the association's profile and generate net revenue to help finance its lobbying initiatives.

The YBB has one of its most important 2008 fund raising events on Thursday, February 21, 2008 at the Sutton Place Hotel which will launch the BIA's IceFest Festival. Sponsors are being recruited to assist with the expenses and donations are needed for door prizes and the silent auction. This will be a casual and fun evening at Stop 33 located at the top of the Sutton Place Hotel — a beautiful venue with a magnificent view of the city.

Four times a year, the YBB hosts well-attended, joint Networking events with the Bloor-Yorkville BIA, with the host providing complimentary hors d'oeuvres. The upcoming holiday Networking event is at the Park Hyatt Hotel on Wednesday, November 28 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

A new 'Membership Mixer' specifically for YBB members and their guests has been organized for Wednesday December 5th at the Duke of York, 39 Prince Arthur Avenue from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Ms Kim Bartley, General Manager of the Duke of York and Director of the YBB Board will be providing her most delicious complimentary hors d'oeuvres. A cash bar will be available.

Other past events undertaken by the YBB have included successful **Golf Tournaments** and the annual **Appreciation Day** for the Toronto Police, Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you about this wonderful organization. If you would be interested in joining one of our committees, attending any of our events, or would like to add your e-mail address to our distribution list, please let me know.

Jenny Hirsch
Association Administrator