



News Release

Mayor refuses to meaningfully address community health, safety and welfare concerns ahead of major infrastructure project

February 8, 2017- Ottawa, Ontario – New Edinburgh Community Alliance / CSST Task Force

New Edinburgh residents were shocked to hear that Mayor Jim Watson refused to meaningfully address the health and safety concerns of the community ahead of the commencement of a signature infrastructure project. During a meeting with a delegation of New Edinburgh community representatives on February 6, the Mayor insisted work on the massive East-West Combined Sewage Storage Tunnel (CSST) centred in Stanley Park would proceed as planned. Since first learning of the CSST project in October 2016, the community has continued to demand that a meaningful assessment be done of the health, safety and welfare implications of three years of blasting, heavy trucks and diesel fumes within a densely-populated residential community, without success. While the City believes that it is respecting baseline health and safety regulations, the community remains unconvinced of the City's grasp on the mitigation of mounting unanswered noise, safety and environmental concerns attributed to the construction and extraction activities associated with the four large shafts in close proximity to many homes.

As local resident David Slinn points out, "Just to be clear, this is not about NIMBYism ('not in my backyard'). These sorts of projects shouldn't be in any residential neighbourhood, but the Mayor refuses to seriously acknowledge the clear advantages presented to all parties as a result of a change in direction of the East-West CSST tunneling."

At a meeting held in New Edinburgh on Saturday, February 4, members of the community expressed their numerous concerns with the CSST project and the City's lack of transparency and accountability. Although residents were aware that the new sewage tunnel would involve some digging in the neighbourhood, they felt blindsided by the fact that the entire project was to be launched from the park in New Edinburgh. "Since learning of this project, the community has been on a steep learning curve and has had to deal with an Ottawa City CSST Project Team that has been remarkably slow or unable to respond to clear questions regarding health, safety and technical aspects of the project," comments Gosse Bruinsma, whose designated heritage property lies within a stone's throw of the main extraction site.

Marta Klepaczek, who lives by Stanley Park and has young children, adds “This is not about opposing a project aimed at protecting the health of the river. We support that objective. We are not talking about minor disruption and inconvenience, but serious and foreseeable harm caused by living at ground zero, next to blasting and tunneling that is occurring within a couple of meters from people’s living rooms in some cases. What we will be exposed to can’t fully be mitigated and can be associated with cumulative and prolonged health impacts, especially in our vulnerable population.”

These views were echoed by Sonny Dhanani, paediatrician and father of 6-year-old Yasmin, “The human health and welfare impacts of this proposal have not been thought through.” The planned 20,000 plus truckloads of drilling muck and disturbance of contaminated soil in Stanley Park continues to raise alarm bells within the community, as does the allowance for noise levels up to 130 decibels – a level that can cause serious harm in a very short amount of time. Nor does there seem to have been any account taken of the fact that the community is home to several schools and at least three retirement residences, which are all regular users of Stanley Park.

The many residents who came out to support the delegation at City Hall expressed their dismay that the Mayor has seemingly become insensitive to voters’ concerns. Residents continue to write to local politicians and have circulated a petition that has attracted more than 600 signatures. The petition argues the community’s health, safety and heritage values are under threat.

During the meeting with the Mayor, the community was invited to present its facts and analysis to City of Ottawa management in regards to alternatives to the extraction and trucking of tunneling materials from Stanley Park. Likewise, the City announced the launch of a CSST New Edinburgh Community Engagement Strategy to better appraise residents of the imminent fallout and impacts of the looming construction about to occur. While the community acknowledges this as a step in the right direction, there remains a large credibility gap to overcome. In the City and contractor’s own documents and schedules, the community believes the incremental costs of switching the direction of tunneling in the East-West tunnel can be offset by schedule gains realized with this switch.

New Edinburgh, which is home to Rideau Hall, is a Heritage Conservation District. Residents also note that the heritage impacts of the project have not been addressed. If the project were to go ahead, New Edinburgh will not be in any state to help celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday despite having an important role in its history.

For further information or to interview delegation members, please contact:

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New Edinburgh Community Alliance / CSST Task Force

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