

Tuesday October 8, 2019

Good afternoon,

My name is Bill McLaughlin. I am the secretary of the London East Lions Club. I would like to speak in favour of keeping the East Lions name associated with the new Community Centre to be located at 1731 Churchill Ave or better known currently as East Lions Park.

Admittedly, as a member of the London East Lions Club I am somewhat biased. However, I am proud to say I have been a member of this club for 27 years. I remember as a new Lion we would hold executive meetings at the East Lions Artisan Centre building that was previously located at East Lions Park. Last year our club participated once again in the adapt-a-park clean up day working around the construction site.

Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world with service clubs in 182 countries with over 1.45 million members in total.

The London East Lions chartered as a club in May 1951. The group consisted of local residents and business leaders in the community coming together to form a service club. Their first major project was to build a park. The members at the time bought the land (using their own homes and businesses as collateral for the mortgage) and built it with their own sweat and hard work. In 1951 members held work parties to clear the land for a playground and a baseball diamond with backstop. In 1953 they added a swimming pool, which they also built. Throughout this period, they also continued to maintain the park. From 1962 - 1964, the club contributed towards additional park equipment and the building of a pool house and auditorium. Without that vision, execution and ongoing commitment, there may not be a park there today and a convenient area of land which the city already owns (gifted to them by the London East Lions) on which to build this exciting new community centre.

I had the opportunity to attend a town hall meeting last week for residents in Ward 2. The things I took away from that meeting when the community centre discussion came up confirmed what I already suspected and yet still surprised me in a sense.

East Lions Park is already a well know established location in the community that people relate to. In practical terms, I get the sense many residents in the area either already do or will refer to the new building as East Lions Community Centre or East Lions Park.

It was also heartwarming to see at the town hall that residents of the community felt a connection to the Park and favoured the East Lions name. An individual stood up (not a Lions member) and gave a brief statement, relating some of the general history of the park I mentioned earlier and recognized the Lions involvement while speaking in favour of the East Lions name. This brought a round of applause from the audience. It made me very proud and I could not help but think of how proud the clubs founding members would be to know that their park continues to have an impact on the community even today and how it will evolve with this exciting new transformation to have an even greater impact in the near future.

An October 3rd CTV news article quotes the Ward 2 councillor who conducted an online poll as saying, "The top name, far and away, is East Lions Community Centre.

From the day we learned that East Lions Park would undergo major changes both to the park and include the building of a new Community Centre, we have greeted the news with enthusiasm and eagerness to sit down with the City of London and discuss our continued involvement. We are currently discussing sponsorship opportunities with programming as well as physical upgrades to the Park with Chris Kubinski and Alana Brant. We look forward to finalizing those agreements in the near future.

It is my personal hope and the hope of the London East Lions Club, which I represent, here today and I think the opinion of members of the community that the East Lions name remain prominent in the name of this exciting new community centre located at our park.

Thank you for your time and consideration.