



This Week in the Annex: April 13, 2022

So Fair and Foul a Day...

Pace Macbeth, it was only the weather that was foul – and even then there were moments of sunshine for which the crowd was grateful. And crowd it was that gathered for the ceremonial groundbreaking on Madison Avenue last Friday for the long-awaited Estonian KESKUS Centre.

Nothing – not even the cold, the raw wind, nor the periodic rain showers could stop the celebration.



Stalwart ARA supporter Tim Hadwen, came to the event bearing both the Canadian and Estonian flags in full-size, 3' X 5' versions. He caught the patriotic display on camera, an Estonian flag even rigged proudly to the top of the wrecking crane.

There was a host of dignitaries present, including, as you can see in Tim's photo, our own Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson who led the roster of distinguished speakers.

The Refugee Connection

Born in Hong Kong, Madame Clarkson shared her personal story of arriving in Canada as refugee in 1942, each family member furnished with just a single suitcase. When she spoke of their voyage on the exchange and repatriation ship the [MS Gripsholm](#) (then flying under the flag of the International Red Cross) there was a murmur of recognition in the audience. For the Gripsholm was the very ship that later brought several thousand Estonians from Sweden to [Pier21 in Halifax](#) in the years after WWII.

As Madame Clarkson noted, while immigrants have benefitted immeasurably from their arrival in this country, they have also contributed hugely to the mosaic of the Canadian cultural experience. And this new KESKUS centre will do much to cement and advance that enrichment.



The architect, Alar Kongats, is pictured above on the left with the Rt Hon Adrienne Clarkson, her husband, John Ralston Saul, and Ellen Valter, project lead for KESKUS. This was something of a reunion as Mr Kongats had been awarded

the first of his three *Governor General Medals in Architecture* by Madame Clarkson during her tenure in Ottawa.

Camera shy ARA Planning and Development Committee member and fellow architect, David Sisam, was outside the photo frame. "Back in the netherworld of the last century," as he phrased it, David had taught Alar Kongats at the University of Toronto School of Architecture. He had come out especially, despite the inclement weather, to congratulate his former student on this splendid project.

Ukraine in the Background

Thrumming in the background was the situation in Ukraine – not a single speaker failing to mention that horrific conflict. Underlying their words was an unspoken awareness of Estonia's similar experiences from past invasions – and looming fears of present danger.



Mr Toomas Lukk, the Estonian Ambassador to Canada since 2018, flew down from Ottawa to help celebrate KESKUS, a project for which he has been an unstinting support. On his lapel he wore a blue sunflower rosette in solidarity with Ukrainian forces and to mark one month of successful resistance to the invasion. In a similar gesture, our own Rt Hon Adrienne Clarkson and John Ralston Saul both wore blue and yellow pins.

Greetings from the City

The Annex was well represented, our chair Rita Bilerman (*below right*) stopping for a photo op with project lead Ellen Valter just as the sun came out.



Also present – dashing in from the opening of the Blackhurst community centre just at the edge of our Annex border – was our City Councillor, Mike Layton.



Mixing the Past with the Future

But it was 6-year-old Estonian-Ukrainian Berkeley Colford, who stole the show in an evocative finale.



Underneath the hard hat and the pink coat that you see below, Berkeley was dressed in national costume and wearing a flower wreath reminiscent of those woven and worn in Estonian summers.



In the closing ceremony, Ellen Valter poured sand that had come from Eesti (Estonia) through Berkeley's outstretched fingers, thus symbolically mixing a little bit of homeland with the KESKUS site. Also pictured above are Berkeley's parents, Kaili and Tyler Colford. (You can watch a brief video of this ceremony [by clicking here.](#))

The symbolism was apparent. The next generation will benefit from the Centre and KESKUS will rise strong. And KESKUS will also, as John Ralston Saul so aptly observed, "...anchor the Annex neighbourhood." We can't wait to celebrate its opening!

Notes and Queries

Meet and Greet at the AGM

Your ARA Board is working hard to prepare for the Annual General Meeting to be held via Zoom on **Thursday April 21st**. If you're at all like us, you crave the opportunity to greet community members in person but recognize that pandemic precautions are still advised. So we thought to imitate the face-to-face experience, if only briefly, by opening the metaphorical doors to the AGM at **6:45 pm**. Registrants will be encouraged to greet and talk with each other on

Zoom, either on open mic or through the online chat, until a few minute before the official start time at **7:00 pm**. So if you haven't already done so, please to [register on our website](#). We look forward to seeing you there.



Potholes Begone!

We say it every year at this time, but, truly, this year it's the case for sure: our roads have never been more riddled with potholes. In fact, they are a shameful disaster! That's why City of Toronto crews will be working extended hours to repair as many potholes as possible on expressways, major roads, and neighbourhood streets ahead of the upcoming long weekend. Around 40 crews are working 12-hour shifts from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day this week. Residents driving or cycling are asked to pack their patience when they encounter pothole crews. Please respect the work zones and give crews space while they make repairs.



Speed Enforcement Blitz

At the same time that the City is addressing the pothole plague, Toronto Police Service has launched a traffic campaign with the title "Speed Kills." Running until this coming Sunday, April 17, the program is focused on slowing drivers down through zero-tolerance enforcement. The sorry fact is that in 2021, a total of 60 people were killed on Toronto's roads. And year to date in 2022, there have already been 14 people killed, 10 of whom were pedestrians. Full details of the campaign can be found on the [Police Service website](#).



Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON)

Last February, City Council green-lighted permissions for housing options meant to increase Toronto's supply, approving in particular the construction of garden suites on properties in most residential zones across the city. The intent was to deliver low-cost housing and allow gentle intensification. But several residents' associations have banded together to appeal the approval. The City is hosting a series of information sessions meant to give residents more information about various EHON initiatives, including not only garden and laneway suites, but also multiplex housing, various forms of townhouses, and low rise apartments. To learn more details and find out how to participate, [click here](#).



The Annex Residents' Association is a volunteer organization of residents committed to improving and preserving the distinctive character of our neighbourhood. Our strength depends on our base of support in a well-informed community.

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The Annex Residents' Association