



TORONTO DISTRICT

SENT VIA EMAIL
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AND VIA FACSIMILE
FAX NO.: 905-832-8535

August 20, 2012

Clerk's Department
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1

Attention: Ms. Sybil Fernandes

Dear Ms. Fernandes:

Re: Proposal for: "The Festival of Light": November 30, 2012 to January 7, 2013
Location: Vaughan City Hall

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COMMUNICATION
CW - Sept 4 / 12
ITEM - Deputation d)

I am writing to you as the President of the National Congress of Italian Canadians-Toronto District. Earlier this year, at a meeting of our Board of Directors, we discussed the possibility of developing an event that would celebrate the customs and traditions of the various cultures and religions that make up the population of Vaughan. Initially, we thought of restricting it to only two, but then realized that all cultures and religions celebrate one particular theme in and around the month of December. Accordingly, we developed an event around the theme of celebrating "light" as part of the various cultures and religions.

The City of Vaughan has a very diverse population and as such, we are of the opinion that the first such celebratory event should take place at Vaughan City Hall. We are aware that the City of Vaughan hosts a tree lighting ceremony and a Menorah lighting ceremony. As well, we are aware that Diwali is also celebrated at the City. Our proposal is somewhat different in that it will include all the existing events however, seek to bring other cultures together and celebrate a common theme during a time when all communities are celebrating, family, friendship, peace and community.

In all the various cultures and religions, the theme and symbolism of "light" is significant and, as such, we have developed the concept of celebrating the theme of "light" during this important period from November 30, 2012 to January 7, 2013.

Our idea is simple: We will promote one event that will take place during the month. We will set up displays that highlight the various cultures and religions and provide literature for those who visit the exhibits. We propose to have the exhibits on display for the entire month of December.

The exhibits will include displays of nativity scenes, menorahs and other traditional artifacts and symbolic pieces that are used in the various cultures. As well, we will have each ceremony as has been done in the past, however one evening, we will have the various cultures and religions represented by their leaders speak of the significance of light to their respective cultures and share as a community traditional food and music. All of this will take place in and around the displays that will be set up in the main gallery of City Hall. It is our hope that through dialogue and education we will learn more about each other thereby doing away with stereotypes, misunderstanding and prejudice.

We have begun the process of discussing this proposal with the various communities and many are interested and prepared to participate. The following groups have been invited and will be participating: Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh, First Nations and Hindu.

We are writing to you to request an opportunity to address Council regarding this proposal so as to obtain permission for such an event to be hosted at Vaughan City Hall. The Festival of Light will take place during the month of December. We hope to commence on Friday, November 30, 2012 with an official opening and schedule the various events planned by the City as part of the month. In addition, we will set up displays that will remain at City hall for public viewing during the entire month. We intend to work with the various school boards to also ensure that as many children as possible have the opportunity to see and participate.

Our intention is to work with City staff and the various departments to ensure that we do not take away from anything that was done in the past but in fact, add to it to include everyone in our community and beyond.

We require assistance from the staff in organizing, co-coordinating and promoting the event. We will require space for the displays. The displays will be viewed during normal business hours and accordingly, there should be no additional cost for staff. We will need to have City Hall open one evening for the actual "Festival" event. We have not selected a date as yet as we have not had a meeting of all participants to coordinate. Each cultural and religious group that evening will be responsible for supplying food. We will also coordinate the music for the evening which shall be a composite of music from each culture.

On January 6, 2012, we will celebrate orthodox Christmas and of course, end with the arrival of "La Befana". The displays will be removed thereafter and the event will terminate.

We believe that this event will be successful in bringing the various communities closer together because its central theme is "light" and as such, is shared by all cultural and religious groups. What we believe will make this event interesting and stimulating for the participants will be the interpretation each culture places on the theme.

I would ask that this request be placed before Council as soon as possible and I would be pleased to be in attendance to present same and answer any questions the mayor or Councilors may have.

Respectfully submitted,

National Congress of Italian Canadians-Toronto District

Per:


Michael A. Tibollo
President