

The current Eesti Maja has been a second home for all of us in the Toronto Estonian Community. We have been there multiple times a week, attending lasteaed, gaidid and skaudid, Eesti kool, rahvatants and various other activities. We developed life-long friendships and memories in this place. We celebrated anniversaries, weddings, people's lives and the Estonian culture that we are all very proud to be a part of. There is no doubt that 958 Broadview holds a special place in all of our hearts. However, the years of discussion and research have concluded that this building that we have called home for over 50 years may be nearing its end.

Luckily, we have been presented with an incredible opportunity to pursue the Madison project and to ensure that our community continues to have a home. This new space gives us the opportunity to make design and functional changes so that it would be more accessible and sustainable for the future. In short, it will allow us to provide things that our current building on Broadview is unable to do. This new space would not be a merely trendy, glass building but an opportunity for growth: we can have our culture and community displayed to the city of Toronto, we can have all of our functions in the same space (as opposed to having some at Tartu College and some at Eesti Maja), and we can dip our toes into the multi-cultural food scene in the city by showcasing an Estonian café in an area of the city that sees a lot of foot traffic and people who want to try something new.

Our community has been brought together by a shared interest in our culture and maintaining our ties with one another. This shared sentiment is something that is not geographically specific to our home on Broadview – we feel it whenever we discuss our culture amongst ourselves and with others who we want to share our culture with. We pride ourselves on the strength of our ethnic pride. We must remember that we *all* want to maintain our community. If our best option is to move approximately 5km west, I am confident that we will not allow geography to get in the way and that we can come together to continue show our community's strength to ensure our future growth.

We have democratically elected a board for the Estonian House and put our trust into them to represent our community's best interests and to do the due diligence in looking into the viability of this project and to ensure that we will have a home in the future. The members on the board have been and continue to be involved in various Estonian organizations and their commitment to the community cannot be doubted. With this, the board has my full support – I trust that they have and will continue to work hard to ensure that we do what is necessary to have a place to call "home".

*Liis Jakobson*