

Many of my early childhood memories involve Toronto's Eesti Maja.

I'm old enough to remember when the kohvik, now non-existent, was at the bottom of the stairs in the basement of the old school house building. It was tiny, and the community was large. We all fit nicely into the house – and it was much smaller then than it is now.

Working as the building manager almost 20 years ago gave me a unique view of the building and its problems. There was no money to do the extensive repairs that were necessary, things were fixed to the best of Eesti Maja's financial ability.

I still work in the building. When the boiler is on strike, it's a cold, unfriendly place to be. I worry about the state of the plumbing when I turn on the tap in the morning to make tea and the water comes out dark brown and runs that way for a while. We have already had one fire when the wiring arced in the walls.

In the last 8-10 years, we have been fortunate that the Eesti Maja board of directors has had so many energetic people willing to devote countless hours to the future of Eesti Maja.

I find it abhorrent that there are people willing to publicly castigate the Board. Many of these suddenly vocal people did not bother to attend the town halls and meetings over the past 8-9 years but now choose to denigrate those who are solving the problem of Eesti Maja's insolvency. Many of these people have done nothing during these years to actively participate in our community, let alone stand for election to the board.

The shareholders have voted for the Madison project and I'm excited about that. If the due diligence shows that the project is financially viable and sustainable, and the logistics of the build can be worked out, it will go forward.

The current objections appear to have settled around the perceived lack of parking spaces. Eesti Maja in New York has survived without a parking lot since it was acquired in 1946. Apparently, where there's a will, there's a way.

It's time for our "family" to look realistically at its resources and possibilities. We have a wonderful chance to build on the legacy we have been left. What the Madison Project represents is a look to the future. And we will have one.

Let's take our family to a new home. It has been a long journey, and I truly believe that the new house will be as beloved to future generations as the current house is to us. And isn't the future where we should be looking?

*Evi Tarkus Vahtra*