

Growing up Estonian in Toronto I was always amazed at the division we had within our small community. With a multitude of Scout Troops, Guide Troops, children's camps and churches, clearly, we all wanted our culture to survive but somehow we just could not agree on a single way of doing it. When my Canadian friends asked me what the Estonian Community was like I often responded with a joke... "*what do you get when you bring two Estonians together....three clubs.*"

As our numbers dwindle, how can we possibly move forward with this attitude? The negative impact of this has been no more apparent in the debate over the future of the Estonian House. Making the situation worse, given modern social media, our embarrassing habit of squabbling amongst ourselves and pointing fingers is now up on the internet for all to see. This debate has even gone so far as to include shameful, slanderous personal attacks on the people that have been kind enough to volunteer to deal with the future of the Estonian House. The question at hand is what has driven people that oppose selling the Estonian House to stoop to this level?

As a professional accountant, I am satisfied that the sale of the Estonian House and the use of the proceeds to build a new centre is a viable course of action; I would go so far as to say that given the Estonian House's condition, its finances, and in the absence of workable alternatives it is the only course of action. The lack of alternatives provided answers my earlier question; those in opposition seem to have nothing else to offer so they have fallen back on the same old squabbling that has divided us for decades. Why are we doing this again? I understand the emotional attachment to the building, but I also know that criticism without constructive input is pointless.

Toronto Estonians have much to be proud of. We have been the driving force behind International Black Ribbon Day, The Victims of Communism Memorial, and The Magnitsky Act; therefore, when we are divided we do far more than undermine our own community. This bickering serves those that would have our voices silenced.

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