

Corktownner

FALL EDITION

CORKTOWN'S SEASONAL NEWSPAPER

OCTOBER 01, 2011

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Cahoots Celebrates 25 Years



Rebecca Applebaum from paper SERIES

photograph by Richard Lee

Founded in 1986, the Cahoots Theatre Company has the distinction of being the first professional company in Canada with a mandate to present culturally inclusive work that reflects Canada's growing multicultural landscape.

Along the way, the company has also enriched and nurtured the skills and experience of scores of emerging and established theatre practitioners while, at the same time, earning a reputation for producing theatre of the highest

artistic calibre at all levels -- local, regional and national.

In December 2010, Cahoots Theatre Company moved into a studio at 388 Queen Street East in Corktown, where

the company is now able to rehearse and develop its own work, as well as offer affordable rehearsal space for other theatre companies. "We're really excited to be a part of this neighbourhood," says General Manager Sandra Lefrançois.

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CRBA Meetings [PAGE 03]

| November 1, 2011
BRUCE BELL

| December 6, 2011
TBD



Cast of paper SERIES

photograph by Richard Lee

“With the building of the Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre and the upcoming 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games, Corktown is quickly becoming a cultural hub.”

Cahoots is committed to providing development for new creations that examine the complexities of individual identities, as well as dynamic social relationships. The company is dedicated to nurturing and producing artists who encompass the entire spectrum of diversity, inclusive of ability, gender, sexual orientation and social status; artists who offer strong, relevant and thought-provoking points of view that cross cultural borders, transcending their own identity and experience.

Last season Cahoots produced Jovanni Sy’s **A Taste of Empire** in the Market Kitchen at St. Lawrence Market; Newworld Theatre’s (Vancouver) **Ali & Ali: The Deportation Hearings at Factory Theatre**; and the world premiere of Governor General’s Literary Award nominee David Yee’s **paper SERIES** at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts. At the 2011 Dora Mavor Moore Awards this past June, Cahoots’ work received nine nominations, and the company came away with two wins.

The upcoming 2011-2012 season will celebrate Cahoots’ 25th anniversary. Among other activities to be announced this autumn, Cahoots will be presenting the world premiere of Matthew Mackenzie’s **SIA**, which was a 2010 Toronto Fringe Festival hit. Set outside the Buduburam Liberian Refugee Camp near Accra, Ghana, **SIA** is the story of a former child soldier who takes a Canadian University student hostage in a desperate bid to stop a War Crimes trial at the International Criminal Court.

A fast and furious examination of the relationship between the developed and the developing world, told through the eyes of young people, who have yet to realize that all are not born free and equal. “**SIA** gives us an in-depth look at the ‘other’. It breaks the narrow confines of our comfortable first world spaces, and opens our eyes to what’s actually happening around the world,” says Artistic Director Nina Lee Aquino.

This season, the company celebrates the legacy of the past 25 years, but they also have big dreams for the future. Cahoots is poised to blaze forward into the coming seasons with a current of exciting works created by some of Canada’s most brilliant culturally diverse artists. Watch for announcements about **SIA** in local media outlets. And when it arrives – don’t miss it! **C**



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Graffiti Prevention Tips

by James Caldwell

About one year ago the good folks at Sherwin-Williams held a 'Graffiti Prevention Clinic' for the residents of Corktown. Those who attended left with some great knowledge about graffiti prevention and also some technical knowledge of graffiti removal. But for those of you who were not able to attend the following are good guidelines.

Preventing Graffiti

- » Protect all the walls of your building with a protective coating
- » If possible install security cameras
- » Try to restrict access to buildings and structures with fences
- » If you choose to paint your building do so with dark colours (make sure you keep your paint chip number)
- » Plant climbing vines or thorny plants along building walls
- » Apply a mural (graffiti vandals usually don't deface artwork)
- » Join a neighborhood watch group

Removing Graffiti

- » Remove the graffiti as soon as possible (see below)
- » Paint over graffiti with a matching paint colour
- » Make sure you use environmentally safe removal products
- » If you are a business, establish a maintenance schedule
- » Hire someone to remove the graffiti
- » Benefit from community cleanups if your property is in an area covered by a volunteer program (**Corktown has one and is always looking for volunteers**)

Remember always be vigilant and remove the graffiti as soon as possible. The faster it is removed the less likely it will reoccur.

City unveils new 'Graffiti Plan'

by Marien Breen

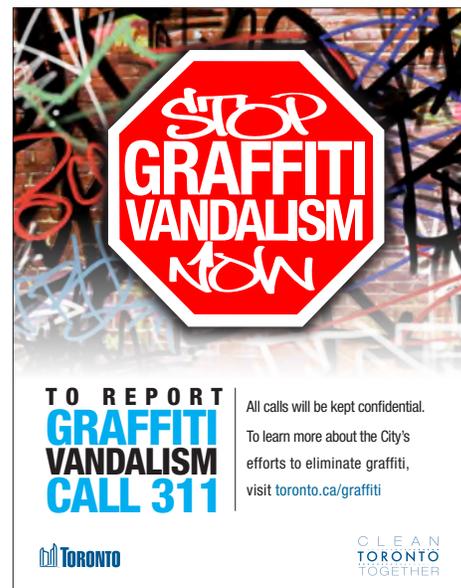
Toronto's newly unveiled Graffiti Management Plan provides a coordinated approach that will help eliminate graffiti vandalism and promote street beautification.

Graffiti is defined as "one or more letters, symbols, figures, etchings, scratches, inscriptions, stains or other markings that disfigure or deface a structure or thing howsoever made or otherwise affixed on the structure or thing, but, for greater certainty, does not include an art mural". For Corktowners, most of the graffiti appearing on buildings falls into the category of annoying 'tags'.

The City's new plan will be a coordinated effort involving municipal departments, agencies, BIA's, commissions, boards, communities and private organizations. They'll all work together to ensure the elimination of graffiti vandalism while at the same time supporting other art forms, such as murals.

The City's bylaw municipal code 485 guides City staff in preventing graffiti and enforcing its removal. Under the bylaw, City workers are required to remove graffiti on city-owned buildings, overpasses, bridges and public parks. The Municipal Licensing and Standards staff will enforce municipal codes and bylaws associated with the upkeep of property standards. They also respond to graffiti complaints and take action on the violations. Toronto Police Services Graffiti Eradication Program also aims to combat graffiti, reduce crime and contribute to urban beautification. To report graffiti vandalism in your neighbourhood by calling the police, dialling 311, or completing the online form on the city's website www.toronto.ca/graffiti.

It's up to property owners themselves to maintain graffiti-free structures by removing spray-painted tags as soon as possible.



Graffiti poster for the City of Toronto

Over the years however, murals have proven to be an effective deterrent to graffiti. The Graffiti Transformation Program, initiated by the City in 1996, provides artists with unique opportunities for positive artistic expression. Since the program began, 430 murals have been created, all over the city.

Recently, the CRBA applied for a city grant and received funding to hire a mural artist. We will begin painting a mural in Corktown this fall at location still to be determined.

Graffiti tagging is considered a minor crime. There have only been a couple of recorded cases where graffiti offences were reported and offenders received legal consequences. But by participating in mural painting in our area, we are taking a proactive stance in the fight against unwanted graffiti tagging.

Join the Corktown Residents and Business Association

463 King St. East, Toronto, ON, M5A 1L6
E-mail: info@corktown.ca

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES AND RATES

- \$12 Resident
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- \$24 Business

MEMBER INFORMATION

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Company Name (if applicable)

Address

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CATEGORY OF MEMBERSHIP REQUESTED AND AMOUNT ENCLOSED

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- \$24 Business

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please mail this completed form to the above address. Corktown board meetings are held at 7:00 p.m., on the first Tuesday of every month except August, in the back-room of the Dominion on Queen at Queen & Sumach. Come out and support your community. All residents and business owners are welcome.

Historian Bruce Bell coming to the CRBA November 1, 2011

by Marien Breen and Donna Keravica

The November 1st meeting of the Corktown Residents and Business Association is one meeting you definitely won't want to miss!

That's because the CRBA has invited Bruce Bell, Toronto's most renowned historian, to tell us all about the history of our community.

Actor, playwright, tour guide, author, lecturer, comedian and more, Bruce Bell is a innately curious and versatile man who, through the years has become an expert on the history of Toronto. The Toronto Star calls him "the most entertaining historian you've ever met, an engaging storyteller who knows more about the history of Toronto than possibly anyone."

Bruce was born and raised in Sudbury but has adopted Toronto as his true home. His mission today is to tell Toronto's history in an informative and entertaining way, through tours, writings and lectures, including his regularly sold-out shows at Toronto's famed Winter Garden Theatre. Hundreds of people have participated in his fascinating talks and tours, and they come from all over the world to learn from him.

Over the years, Bruce's fascination with history, especially Toronto history, has garnered him some impressive honours.

In 2002, he was named the official historian for St. Lawrence Hall as well as the St. Lawrence Market; in 2003, he became honorary historian for the Hockey Hall of Fame; in 2004, official historian for the King Edward Hotel; and in 2006, he was named honorary historian of the 51 Division Heritage building by Toronto Police Services. Lastly in 2007, the Fairmont Royal York recognized Bruce's expertise and appointed him honorary historian of their hotel.

Bruce also sits on the board of the Town of York Historical Society and gives guided tours of historic neighbourhoods. He's written two books **Amazing Tales of St. Lawrence Neighbourhood** and the just published **TORONTO: A Pictorial Celebration**.



Bruce Bell

Bruce has also started a history project whereby he is placing large bronze plaques in historical sites such as Toronto's first jail, the site of the Great Fire of 1849, the birthplace of Robert Baldwin and many others.

Bruce Bell also writes a monthly column on the history of Toronto in the St. Lawrence Bulletin, Canada's largest community newsletter. You can check him out at his website, www.brucebelltours.ca.

Meantime, mark Tuesday November 1st on your calendar! Backroom of the Dominion on Queen, 500 Queen St. East, corner of Sumach and Queen at 7:00 pm. Don't miss this rare opportunity to be informed and entertained by this knowledgeable local historian.

Corktown Online

For the latest updates please visit:

Website

www.corktown.ca

Forum

<http://groups.google.com/group/corktown>

Twitter

<http://twitter.com/CorktownTO>

email

info@corktown.ca

Write for the Corktowneer!

We want to hear from you! Residents and business owners are encouraged to submit articles of interest for publication in the newsletter. Submit your articles for The Corktowneer to: info@corktown.ca. All submissions may be subject to editing.

Advertise in the Corktowneer!

The Corktowneer was recently redesigned by a few of our industrious members on the CRBA Board. Our newsletter is published quarterly, and distributed to all homes and businesses within the Corktown area. This area spans from the DVP on the east, to Berkeley Street on the west; and from the south side of Shuter Street down to Front Street.

Distribution is approximately 2,500 – and growing quickly – as more new residents and businesses are drawn to this vital and quickly-expanding area of downtown.

In order for any community to thrive, it's vital to promote our businesses and services within so that residents can make an informed decision to Shop Local.

Why not promote your business in the next issue of the Corktowneer? Costs are very reasonable and if you buy four ads (the yearly package), you will get a sweet deal on the fourth.

Advertising subscriptions are now available! To advertise with us, please contact advertising@corktown.ca.

Corktown Mission Statement

The Corktown Residents and Business Association exists to enhance the quality of residential and business life, to promote and market Corktown and to act as a voice for the community.

Don't miss any Corktown meetings!

You're concerned about what's happening in the neighbourhood, so be sure to attend the Corktown Residents and Business Association meetings.

The CRBA lines up speakers to keep us on track regarding on-going changes in the area, and new ways to deal with problems we often face on a daily basis. Bring your questions – bring your concerns – and speak up.

Our meetings begin at 7 p.m., first Tuesday of every month except for August. The meetings are held in the back room of the Dominion on Queen, at Queen St. and Sumach.

UPCOMING CRBA MEETINGS:

November 1, 2011

Bruce Bell

Read all about Bruce on page 4.

December 6, 2011

TBD

Where we were...

9 Years ago in Corktown

Summer of 2002, CRBA folks were working hard on putting out a new issue of the Corktown NEWS. As a kind of blast-from-the-past, here's one of the articles that issue included.

Neighbourhood Bits & Bites

by Ingrid Gadsden

Tent City Population Rises

Despite an eviction notice issued by the Ministry of the Environment about 18 months ago, the homeless population at Cherry Street and Lakeshore, now widely referred to as "Tent City", has grown to well over 100, most of whom are firmly resistant to offers of shelter space. Home Depot (HD), owner of the site, is putting no pressure on government agencies to move the homeless out, but they're keeping a keen eye on the place. While the land is contaminated with PCBs, David Day, a spokesman for HD says there's no immediate health risk. "It all depends on how long a person lives directly on contaminated land" he says, adding that "HD is working with a committee that includes Councillor Jack Layton to see what can be done to find an alternate location for the homeless." Home Depot's application to build an outlet-store at the site was turned down by the ORC last year, due to local resident concerns.

Addendum in 2011: *On September 24, 2002, security officers under direction of Home Depot, began evicting all tenants from Tent City. The land has been vacant since then and is now being used as a parking lot.*

Shooting on Sumach Street

Sargent Tom Kelly of 51 Division says officers responded to a report of gunshots on Sumach Street south of Shuter, in late July. They found no one, however staff at Toronto East General Hospital later reported treating a patient with non-life threatening wounds to the leg. Investigation revealed he'd been shot in Corktown. Sargent Kelly reports that while the suspect is known, the victim is not cooperating nor have any

witnesses come forward. Anyone who heard gunshots in late July, on Sumach Street between Queen and Shuter, around 5:30 a.m., and who can offer insight into this shooting is asked to call Sargent Kelly at 416-808-5100.

Local Church Closes

We note that the Church of Jesus Christ Inc., at the north/east corner of River and Labatt Streets, has closed its doors and removed all signage. No information as to where they've moved. The little church had become a familiar landmark in the neighbourhood and many of us enjoyed the melodious heart-felt hymn-sings that congregants would hold in their parking lot on sunny summer Sunday mornings. Wherever they've relocated to, we wish them well and we'll miss their unique contribution to our area.

Housing Development beside Little Trinity Church

In answer to a desperate need for affordable housing, Little Trinity Church has announced plans to build 20 one- and two-bedroom units on their property near King Street and Parliament. Fifteen will be affordable units for hard-to-house people and five will be rented to established members of Little Trinity's congregation, who will act as on-site resources for residents. The complex will include kitchens, a common meeting room, 10 teaching rooms and a gymnasium which will be open to the public. The exterior design will respect the scale and character of other existing heritage buildings in the area. With construction to begin soon on the new police station at Front and Parliament directly south of Little Trinity's development, this corner of Corktown is about to undergo a dramatic facelift.

Addendum in 2011: *The Police Station went ahead, but Little Trinity's housing plans were put on hold.*

Gooderham & Worts Elects First Board

The Corktown Residents and Business Association offers congratulations to the executive officers of the Gooderham & Worts Neighbourhood Association. Elected to the new GWNA board are: Lester Brown, President; Natasha Bartels, V-P; Lou Ampas, Treasurer; Julie Beddoes, Secretary; William Prine, Membership Secretary. Corktown board members look forward to working with the GWNA in dealing with a wide variety of issues affecting our area.

Olde York Village Update

Sixteen residents of Olde York Village (the new development north-east of the Humane Society, off River Street) met at the Dominion on Queen, on August 8th for an informal "meet the neighbours" evening. Most of the 33 homes are now occupied and everyone looks forward to the city paving the roads and installing street lights and signs. An Olde York Village electronic mailing list has been started for those who wish to keep in touch more often via the web. To join, got to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/olde_york_village and

then click on "Join this Group". From there, just follow the instructions to have your say and make your own contribution.

Flowers Blooming Everywhere!

If you've been strolling around Corktown this summer, you've noticed that more and more residents took time to plant flowers and perennials in front yard gardens. Way to go! As a result of those efforts, Corktown is the prettiest it's ever been. The flowers in the tree-boxes along Queen between River and Sumach and on Sumach south of Queen, are in full bloom thanks to the vigilant care of Corktown's self-titled "Weed Witch", who wishes to remain anonymous. We'd like to acknowledge the efforts of this generous lady who's out there, day-in and day-out, watering, weeding and tending the flowers! You've outdone yourself this year, "Weed Witch". Thank you very much!

Good Health Tip!

Almost a year ago, 360° Health Care, at 360 King Street East, opened its doors to patients in need of a chiropractor or naturopath. "Business is doing well and Corktown is a great area to be involved in", says Michelle Bodner, one of the three naturopaths at the clinic. A chiropractor is also on site daily. For more information, drop-in Monday to Saturday after 10:00 a.m. or call 416-360-1300.

***Addendum in 2011:** 360° Health Care is still operating and thriving – phone number is still the same.*

King & Sumach Development on North/East Corner

Businesses and residents in the vicinity of the above location received notice of a public meeting at City Hall, on September 12, to listen to a proposal to amend zoning bylaws so that the lot can be used for residential housing. Twelve row-houses with detached garages are planned, a drastic reduction from the original plan of 30 stacked townhouses, which residents adamantly opposed and voted down. If no glitches arise and if those attending the meeting agree with this new design, building permits will be applied for and construction will likely begin in early spring 2002. The row-house entrances will run along north side of King Street from Sumach to Ashby Place.

*In 2002, Corktown was a community in transition. Today it still is. But by the time construction is complete on all the residential and recreational projects around us, Corktown will be transformed. It is a change the CRBA and vocal residents fought for and thanks to their efforts and our input, Premier Mike Harris never did get that harness race track in the West Don Lands but instead we have the Waterfront Plan. As a community we have worked hard to make Corktown a friendlier and safer place to live and now we're seeing that materialize. It took over 10 years to get to where we are, but our planning is good and it's on the right track. Let's not let anyone change our plan, let's keep going – **the future looks bright for Corktown!***

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Helping you plant the Right Tree in the Right Space

If you've been looking for the perfect tree to shrub to plant in your back yard, along with advice on how to ensure it grows and thrives, you might want to give the folks at LEAF a call.

Founded in Leslieville in 1995 and incorporated in 2003 as a non-profit organization, LEAF's mission is to protect and



Photo: © 2011 Kyle Ferguson / LEAF

Field Operations Supervisor Michael Alkema and Education and Stewardship Coordinator Jessica Piskorowski plant an ironwood tree in a Toronto backyard.

preserve our urban forest and encourage further growth of our downtown canopy.

LEAF's founder, Janet McKay learned back in 1995 that 85% of plantable tree space in Toronto was located on private property. To encourage property owners to plant trees, she began a small tree seedling distribution project and while homeowners planted the seedlings she distributed, most did not survive or reach maturity as she had hoped.

MacKay's creation of a Backyard Tree Planting Program helped overcome the problem of low tree survival rates and a few years later, with the help of a federal grant, she was able to hire 15 youths to be identifying sites and planting trees specifically suited to individual backyards. Their criteria were based on light conditions and soil quality.

By 2003, LEAF's Tree Tenders Volunteer Training and Tree Tours programs came into being but staff remained small – LEAF was still a grassroots organization. By 2008, however, their powerful message about the benefits of tree planting took root and spread widely. Homeowners signed on in droves. LEAF experienced rapid growth – funding grew, staff tripled. A new program called 'Cool Communities' was developed.

Since 1996, LEAF has helped urban citizens plant more than 16,000 trees and shrubs. Some 500 individuals have graduated from the Tree Tenders Volunteer Training Program with the skills to effectively advocate on behalf of urban forests, not only in Toronto, but also in York Region, Cambridge, Guelph and Kitchener/Waterloo.

Today, LEAF continues to seek out opportunities to improve city life – one tree at a time.

If you've got an empty space in your back yard, give them a call. LEAF's Backyard Tree Planting Program offers native trees and shrubs to homeowners at a subsidized cost through the contribution of supporting partners. Certified arborists help you make an educated decision about the type of tree or shrub that best suits your property, and where it should be planted.

While five- to eight-foot tall native trees cost between \$150 - \$200 each and native shrubs about \$25 each, LEAF's service also includes full planting work and monitoring to ensure the tree not only survives, but thrives.

To book a consultation with this local not-for-profit organization, or to order shrubs or trees, visit www.yourleaf.org or call 416-413-9244.

Mandatory downspout disconnection

Most property owners and residents received flyers in the mail in the past month alerting them to a new bylaw that comes into effect November 20, 2011.

If you have downspouts which carry rainwater off your roof and run down the side of your home and which disappear into the ground at the base of the wall, then your downspouts are connected to the storm sewer system and you are required to disconnect them and divert the flow away from your house and onto the surface of your land, or into a rain barrel.

You can do this easily by yourself. All the information you need can be found at http://www.toronto.ca/water/protecting_quality/downspout.htm or by calling 311.

There are cases where it is not feasible to comply with the bylaw, and in these instances, there is an exemption application process.

Get onto this right away - November will be here in no time!

Close call in the bike lane

by Francine Barry

I once heard of a colleague's daughter dying after being crushed under the wheels of a huge truck as it made a right turn on a Toronto street. I promised myself then that I would always stop behind one of these monster vehicles, never beside it.

However, recently I was stopped at a red light in the bike lane when a large construction truck pulled up on my left. The cab was so high I could not eyeball the driver. Neither could I tell if he was continuing straight on, or turning right. I wondered if he had registered that I was below his line of sight and whether he was used to driving on Toronto streets shared with bicycles. Slowly a sickening feeling grew in my stomach that this was not a safe place to be. When the light turned green, I hauled my bike onto the sidewalk and the truck barely missed me as it made a right turn, driving through the bike lane and up over the curb! I was white with fright when I realized what a close call I'd had. The truck driver wasn't aware of me there, or had forgotten. I would have been toast for sure if I had ignored my gut feeling.

So, my fellow cyclists, please don't get caught like this – be extra careful when you cannot make eye contact with any driver. The big guy always wins.

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New homeowners: Know your rights!

by Jonathan Goode

With all the new home and condominium construction in Corktown, it is important that new owners are aware of their rights under the Ontario New Homes Warranties Plan Act (the “Act”).

The Act is consumer protection legislation enacted by the Government of Ontario to ensure that new home buyers are offered some degree of protection when buying a new home or condominium and is administered exclusively by Tarion Warranty Corporation (“Tarion”)

Pursuant to the Act, every vendor of a new home or condominium in Ontario warrants to the owner, among other things,

- (a) that the home,
 - (i) is constructed in a workmanlike manner and is free from defects in material,
 - (ii) is fit for habitation, and
 - (iii) is constructed in accordance with the Ontario Building Code; and
- (b) that the home is free of major structural defects as defined by the regulations.

In the event that the vendor of your home or condominium breaches this warranty, the Act provides that you may be entitled to have any deficiencies or defects corrected or to receive compensation for them.

Although the Act is government backed, the warranty is funded by the builders themselves and administered by Tarion. Tarion is also tasked with ensuring that the warranty fund is appropriately managed. New home-owners should not be surprised to learn that because of this, claims for a breach of the Tarion Warranty are not always a smooth and painless procedure.

In order to ensure that you receive the benefit of the warranty, it is critical that you understand your rights and entitlements under the warranty and your obligations for making a claim. Some helpful hints follow:

1. The Warranty is your vendor/builders warranty, Tarion merely acts as the Surety. Tarion will always attempt to involve the builder in rectifying any warranty items in your home or condo before they fix it themselves or offer a cash settlement. This can be a long procedure and requires a lot of patience;
2. The Warranty is actually three separate warranties:
 - (a) a one-year warranty for all construction defects and deficiencies;
 - (b) a two-year warranty for water penetration; and
 - (c) a seven-year warranty for major structural defects.

Because of this, it is important to claim all items as soon as possible.

3. The warranty runs from the date specified in your Certificate of Completion and Possession which the vendor is obligated to provide to the Buyer. If you are a buying a brand new home or condo, make sure that you receive your Certificate of Completion and Possession;
4. There are specific forms and procedures which are required to be followed for each of the three warranties. Failure to properly follow these procedures could result in your waiving your right to warranty coverage;
5. If Tarion makes a decision in respect of your warranty that you disagree with, you are entitled to appeal that decision to the License Appeal Tribunal. Remember that you have only 15 days to appeal a decision made by Tarion under the Act.
6. The monetary limit for Warranty Coverage was recently increased to \$300,000.00; and
7. Depending on the nature of your Condominium Corporation, the Condominium Corporation’s common elements may be eligible for warranty protection.

Jonathan Goode is a lawyer with Torkin Manes LLP in Toronto. Jonathan practices exclusively in the area of construction law and regularly advises new homeowners on the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act.

A Corktown in Holland

by Martin Trainor, CRBA member and Toronto Cube Resident

If there was ever a list of the seven wonders of Toronto, included would be the green structure at the north east corner of Eastern Avenue and Sumach Street.

Since 1996, tourists and locals alike have stared up trying to figure out just what those boxes are, and how can anyone actually live in them. As a resident of the habitat, Martin Trainor has had to solve the mystery for loads of people over the nine years he's been living in the Corktown Cubes.

"No, you don't have to climb the pole to get in. No the floors are not slanted. Yes it can be compared to a boat in the sky." Teasingly, Martin suggests that visitors will have to put on magnetic boots to walk around, or that he sleeps in a velcro bag attached to the slanted walls.

To resolve some of these visitors questions, Martin recently traveled to the hub of all things Cube, in The Netherlands, where there is a thriving Cube community.

Rotterdam has a long tradition of modern architecture with its Witte Huis or "White House" being the tallest building in Europe in 1898. When the late architect Piet Blom developed Kubuswoningen or "Cube Houses" in the 1970s, even the Dutch were surprised by the outcome.

Blom saw each cube-shaped dwelling as a "treehouse" or "polehouse" in a forest, or as a modular component in an urban village that would combine functions such as housing, small businesses, or a theatre. He built his first batch of 21 cube houses in the town of Helmond in 1977. Blom then presented his concept for the Rotterdam Kubuswoningen, and the project was completed in 1984.

Today, the cube houses are designated as a municipal monument by the City of Rotterdam. Consisting of 38 dwellings - two large cubes and one extra large now used as a hostel - they are an integral part of the tourist business, and very much part of the city core. The large yellow cubes are a landmark, situated beside a Metro station and a thriving open market, which is about four times the size of the St. Lawrence market.

There are so many visitors to the Kubuswoningen that one resident set up a permanent 'viewing cube' or Kijk-Kubus. Ed DeGraaf is president of the cubes residents association. He guides an astonishing 35,000 visitors per year through the three-level structure, while he actually lives in one nearby. At two and a half euros per person, he can operate a business and satisfy a required tourist demand. "The cubes are not a house for everybody, but those who buy, make it work" he says, "people get the urge to find out for themselves how to live efficiently".

Ed had originally advised on the Toronto cubes, with three possible locations being considered on Toronto Islands, the St. Lawrence Market area, and Sumach Street. Developers Ben Kutner and partner Jeff Brown had originally planned for seven cubes, which could still one day come to be. As the area becomes more widely developed, it is encouraging to see that these cubes have a definite purpose. Not only as a residence, but possibly as a destination with activities. With the PanAm Games arriving, they will certainly be a magnet for those who wonder.

To see photos of Martin's Rotterdam cubes, go to <http://picasa.google.com/> and search for "rotterdam cubes".



In between the Rotterdam cubes

photography by Martin Trainor