

PREVENTING THE DEATH OF NEIGHBORLINESS

The importance of neighbours stretches far back into when the fabric of society was being stitched. Yet, neighbours are some of the most under-appreciated people in one's life. Society needs to praise neighbours significantly more in order to continue to receive the benefits of neighbourliness. Neighbours offer bountiful potential, promote goodwill in society, and encourage positive virtues in others. However there is a critical social concern, especially within the region of Peel.

What is a neighbour? The definition of what a neighbour is has changed greatly in meaning over many years. Currently, the Oxford dictionary of English simply states that a neighbour is "a person or place in relation to others next or near to it". However that is only the denotation of the word, its connotative meaning gives a much more emotional take. There are multiple biblical references which define a neighbour to be someone close, such as a brother or other member of family. However that definition later broadened from fellow member of an exclusive group to include everyone one had come into contact with. Neighbourliness can be then therefore described as the attitude and interactions between two parties.

However, neighbourliness can be found described as treating one with a special love solely because one was within reach. As per definition neighbours can have many positive impacts on any group, community or society. There are many tales of neighbours assisting one another in great times of need, such as a flood, storm or any other natural disaster. Yet, neighbourliness can be through smaller aids, such as taking care of a pet, tending to plants, babysitting kids or even helping out with domestic chores. As well neighbours can even help out a municipality with initiatives such as the neighbourhood watch. However, members within a family get their respective day of praise such as "Father's Day" or "Mother's Day", yet neighbours, despite all the help they provide, are left "empty-handed" in terms of receiving public gratitude (within the region of Peel). "Neighbours Day" does not exist, save in a select few municipalities around the world (though not on the same scale as other commemorative days), which is a significant problem.

Neighbours must be appreciated more effectively in order to promote community spirit. Everyone internally feels a need to be recognized. As American philosopher William James stated "What every genuine philosopher (every genuine man, in fact) craves most is praise..." This statement speaks out to one of the basic human wants, the want to be recognized. If nothing is done to recognize neighbours then it cannot be ultimately assumed that such positive actions will be performed continuously. In fact, within a study conducted by Marie-Claire Carpentier-Roy, a skilled sociologist from the University of Montreal, *"...research has shown that when recognition is a part of everyday work relationships, it benefits individuals, the organization, and, more broadly, society because it restores work to its rightful place in individual and social development. Recognition gives people renewed motivation and a renewed sense of belonging and meaning in their work."* Thus if immediate action is not undertaken, societies globally may find a decline in the benefits of having neighbours.

What can be done? The United States of America can be turned to for direction under this circumstance. In America there is a public holiday entitled "Thanksgiving" which is celebrated by all. However, unlike the Canadian holiday under the same name, this holiday was to commemorate the gratitude the American Pilgrims had for all of the blessings that they were granted. One such blessing they received was the helpfulness of the Native Americans.

The Native Americans taught the Pilgrims how to farm in the geographic conditions which the Pilgrims were unused to from the special love which is shared through the interaction of two parties, the neighbourliness. The Thanksgiving holiday provides an example of what could be done to showcase gratitude to neighbours globally. Similar to a "Customer's Appreciation Day" a business may hold, a Neighbour's Day not only would the general public benefit, but it would also act as promotional marketing. A Neighbour's Day could raise community spirit through the public expressions of gratitude as well as attract new residents to the region of Peel, allured by the understanding that positive actions are valued and appreciated, thus promoting the positive reputation which the region has established.

The "Region of Peel Strategic Plan" lists social development as a key section to be considered in the ultimate future of the region of Peel. The goal "Implement prevention strategies that result in measurable outcomes and social change." is listed as a main point under this section. An implementation of a "Neighbours Day" would dramatically increase morale within the community and bring measurable change through the increase in community participation and involvement. This increase would allow for the increased collaboration to output the ingenuity which the region of Peel has been associated with for so long.

Neighbours have had underlying roles back for thousands of years, however the lack of appreciation must change. The region of Peel is considered a leader to smaller municipalities, it is therefore suiting for Peel to be the first to undertake the initiative of displaying gratitude towards its citizens. It is clear from the rigorous process of legislation that the region of Peel keeps the interests and feelings of the citizens in consideration. A Neighbour's Day would only provide as further confirmation of that point, and aside from that, it is about time for citizens to be able to show appreciation to one another.