

HELPING OUR NEIGHBOURS

The following covers the initial meetings of residents volunteering with the “Helping Our Neighbours” project, held on November 17, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

In attendance (floor in brackets): Vladas Butkys (8th), Sean Cumming (24th), Sylvia Drop (17th), A. Durasevic (20th), Terry Graham (6th), Claire and John Hardie (11th), Niloofar Irani (26th), Joanne Kelly (7th), Leona Kirejczyk (11th), Anita Li (25th), Marsha Melnik (24th), Holly Price (25th), Joyce Reynolds (3rd), Else Simomavicus (17th), Pauline Walsh (20th), Jiri Werner (20th).

Regrets: Renate Dickman (23rd), Carole Ginzel (23rd)

Facilitated by: Marsha Melnik and John Hardie

The purpose of the initial meeting was to come up with a list of concerns, which would then be addressed in future meetings, leading ultimately to a structure for Helping Our Neighbours.

The examples of the 2003 blackout and a more recent half-day power outage were used to get people to think about how residents (both themselves and their neighbours) are affected by lack of electricity, and the following concerns were expressed:

- No water for: toilet, taps, drinking, cooking, washing, taking pills
 - No electricity for stoves or refrigerators (frozen food will thaw)
 - No lights in units – emergency lights in corridors
 - No heat (winter) or air conditioning (summer)
-
- People living alone/elderly: isolated; frightened; medications running low
 - Can’t shop for groceries; supply of cold food/canned food on hand?
 - Consideration of food/water for pets

- Medical/oxygen equipment not working
 - Delivery of oxygen
 - Can visiting nurses/care givers get in
 - Medical emergencies: how to contact responders; can they get in
-
- No elevators – guidelines for sharing the one on back-up power
 - Reduced mobility – trapped on top floors
 - Garage door – will it open or not
 - Security – do doors on fobs stay locked or unlock; what about keys
 - Will fire alarm go off
 - Should there be specific evacuation procedures for specific emergencies
-
- No telephone: cell phone towers might overload (happened in 2003); Bell land line okay; Rogers has 6-hour batteries built in; cordless phones require power for transmission
 - No news from outside world
 - No radio, TV or computers (for information and/or entertainment)
 - No indication of how long emergency will last or what is being done
-
- Do we know our neighbours, and how well?
 - How can “less-abled” residents be identified?
 - Will recipient be open to receiving help?
 - Volunteers’ availability; commitment

Niloofer volunteered to do research on the Condominium Act to see if it contains any reference to emergency measures being undertaken by residents/Board/Management.

Concern was expressed about whether a volunteer would be held liable for specific actions or inaction. One way to think about it is that “we are responsible to people but not for people “. This issue should be followed up with a lawyer.

Other issues that require a confirmation or follow-up were:

- Role of Management/Board: co-ordination; communication
- What is available from Management/Board now
- How long does generator work; how long will fuel last; exactly what does generator support
- Confirm to which floor water will be pumped (7th floor?), and for how long
- What are the guidelines governing use of the Public Address system
- Are emergency lights in corridors on generator or batteries
- Will all electronically-operated doors be secure/operable
- Who in the building has medical background, and are they willing to be called on during an emergency

The topic was raised of how to get more people involved. One suggestion was to start with one floor, get all the people there together and brief them on the Helping Our Neighbours project, and discuss how it would work only on that one floor. The information gathered could then be extended to other floors over time.

John handed out a list entitled “A Few Things To Think About” (copy attached) which he had prepared before the meeting. On reviewing the list, it was noted that a majority of the items had been independently raised at the meeting, with only a couple left “to think about” at future meetings.

John introduced the website currently under construction for YCC323, and pointed out that a separate section could be included in the website dedicated to Helping Our Neighbours. Ideas can be shared and lists of “who can help with what” can be posted. He asked those present to send other concerns or suggestions to health.safety@ycc323.com.

Terry pointed out that, before we can follow a Plan, we need to formulate one. An integral part of the Plan would be a Tips list, e.g. have flashlights on hand (see the 72-Hour Self-Sufficiency checklist available in the Meeting Room).

Those present agreed to hold another meeting, at which items of concern will be prioritized, suggested solutions will be raised/researched, and a Plan will be started. The Health & Safety Committee agreed to call the next meeting(s), which will be held in January.

It was emphasized at each meeting that only the initial meetings are being facilitated by the Health & Safety Committee. While the members of the Committee are all volunteering as individuals to work on the Helping Our Neighbours project, it is a completely separate entity from the Committee, and in future will be administered by its own volunteers.