

John Lorinc, journalist, author is next up as the Can/Hist STBI speaker

Written By Constance Scrafield

Well-known journalist, John Lorinc is coming to the Grace Tipling Hall on Thursday, April 25, to discuss how small towns like Shelburne, Orangeville and neighbouring municipalities are affected by the encroaching spread of nearby larger cities.

By insisting there are better ways to build and that it is a very bad policy to encourage the use of gas for energy, Mr. Lorinc sees care for the environment as a natural outcome of building wisely, he told the Citizen in a recent interview.

Writing for a number of publications, such as the Globe and Mail and Canadian Geographic, among many others, he is senior editor of Spacing Magazine. Already a published author of a number of books, lately Dream States, which looks at the increasing role of technology in cities, he has another book coming out in the fall. This is a memoir about his own family coming through the war.

'Tech is a tool, not an end in itself,' he said. 'We have this whole system of flood control. Ontario is ahead of the pack about flooding after Hurricane Hazel.'

Toronto has made the whole effort to make the ravine system spongier.

He said, 'At the end of the day... you also need to deal with the need for pipes and tanks.'

Shelburne is in the housing business, as the number of residents increases.

Kitchener-Waterloo are good studies, of how they affect the rural, smaller communities and their impact on social services. There are a lot of opportunities to take advantage of the proximity of big cities, which smaller cities should do, he opined.

In constructing new buildings, 'other technologies are useful like heat pumps as they don't use any gas,' he said but added regretfully that the Ford government is installing more hooks to allow for natural gas.

He stated clearly, 'Government needs to pass rules that allow home builders to avoid gas. There needs to be a more impactful legislation.'

Mr. Lorinc agrees there should be more solar, 'Everybody says the gadgets are the last thing we do. But, certainly, they could be put on new-built; it should be mandatory. The cost is way lower than it used to be. Political leaders need to say we should insist.'

The fact is, suburban developments are long-standing orbits of cities. He once interviewed a forester who said wisely, 'The difference between a collection of houses and a subdivision is the trees.'

Technology is very invasive. The proposed Harbourfront Smart Neighbourhood in Toronto was cancelled.

He said, 'The pandemic stopped the project but it had generated so much controversy over proposed face recognition, the American company didn't want to bother going ahead with it.'

'There is surveillance everywhere,' he commented, 'but it's when there is software for face recognition, as in China, that there are objections elsewhere.'

There were various police agencies in the US experimenting with AI that could identify people.

Emphatically, he said, 'This is why democratic oversight and a well-informed media [are important], the revelations came out by

media reporting. In China there's controlled media only.?

This is part of smart cities and the engagement of people is necessary.

?You can't take your rights for granted,? he observed.

?My view is there are multiple uses to compact communities. Density is not for everybody. Preservation of farmland is important. We can create more vibrant areas and density brings down housing costs.?

In creating more density, there are plenty of ways of doing that with big towers but fewer of them. There are neighbourhoods in mature cities that prove the theory. More people in communities are likelier to encourage creativity and micro-economies. Creating such communities means less need for driving.

Reporters have to work to bring information to people, fair and accurate, so people can respond.

Mr. Lorinc loves journalism.

?I have the privilege of meeting all sorts of people,? he said. ?This is what I do, It's so important when there is so much misinformation out there. We have to be provocative and bring accurate information. I'm incredibly fortunate.?

BookLore is bringing copies of Mr. Lorinc's books to his presentation on April 25 for sale and for him to sign.

The presentation starts at 7:30 p.m.

?What I'm going to be talking about is housing, how it affects everyone. All these places are part of the storyline, and they have to find a way of living in a city in order to define where are the next generation of families going to live.

?One of which is to reduce our impact on the environment,? Mr. Lorinc commented.

Of the 100-storey towers in Toronto, his concern is the way they are designed, that we should be building better.

?We should be building them to last 100 years,? he said.

By the bye, you might like to look up his book about dumplings.

For tickets at \$10 go to <https://canhist.ca/small-town-big-ideas>