

Gay village supporters told to move fundraiser; Blame BIA for order to change venue from Bank Street

The Ottawa Citizen

Tue Sep 9 2008

Page: B3

Section: City

Byline: Brendan Kennedy

Source: The Ottawa Citizen

The organization trying to have a six-block stretch of Bank Street designated as a **gay village** has been forced to move a fundraising event off Bank Street, and they're blaming the business improvement area.

"What we're most frustrated with is the symbolic shoving aside of us off the street," said Glenn Crawford, chairman of the Bank Street Village Initiative, which is pushing for Bank between Nepean and James streets to be officially designated Ottawa's **gay village**.

The organization is hosting a barbecue and screening of The Wizard of Oz tonight from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., on Gilmour between Bank and O'Connor.

Mr. Crawford and other organizers were told by city officials on Friday that their permit would only be approved if the event were moved off Bank.

"Symbolically, we wanted to be on the street, given what we're trying to achieve on Bank Street," Mr. Crawford said, adding that he believes the event was forced off Bank because of pressure placed on the city by Gerry LePage, executive director of the Bank Street Promenade Business Improvement Area. Relations between the Village Initiative and the BIA have become strained since early last month, when the BIA's board decided against supporting the **gay village** designation, opting instead for a "bottom up" policy of branding for the neighbourhood, whereby individual businesses could choose to identify themselves as gay-oriented or gay-friendly.

The city's special events co-ordinator, Ainsley Shepherd, said the event could not have been held on Bank because "there was not sufficient time and consensus to allow it."

She said there were several other factors, including ongoing construction on Bank and projected attendance that did not merit closing a main arterial.

According to Marcus McCann, a member of the Village Initiative, the application for the event was e-mailed and faxed to the city on Aug. 9, but got caught in "bureaucratic hell," for several weeks.