

Don Mills Friends

Concerned Don Mills Residents for Maintaining the Don Mills Centre Indoor Mall



www.donmillsfriends.org; 416-446-0862

June 2007

Appeal to the Teachers of Ontario

Teachers—Have a Heart for Don Mills! Canada's first planned community needs your help!

Teaching is a highly respected profession, and rightfully so. Our teachers impart knowledge, wisdom, and discernment to the young minds upon whom we build our future—our children.

A survey done in the Fall of 2006, sponsored by the Canadian Council on Learning, shows that Canadians expect schools to not only prepare students for work and further learning, but also to teach them *to be good citizens*. In October 2006, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced a \$2 million investment in *character education* in our schools. He explained that education is also “about building strong citizens who are prepared to make a contribution to their community.”

Education Minister Kathleen Wynne added that character education changes the “civility level” in a school, teaching children to treat each other with more respect, among other things.

It is often said that the best way to teach is by example—in the way we live, and in the way we treat others, individually and collectively, in our families, homes, schools, businesses, and communities. We must *be* the change we seek; we can't say one thing and do another—we must be authentic.

Many people today carry this sense of authenticity beyond their personal lives into ethical investing—they want to be sure that their portfolios and retirement plans are built in ways that are ethically sound and contribute, rather than take away from, the individuals and communities affected.

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan owns numerous investments. Among them is Cadillac Fairview, the company that owns the property on which once stood the Don Mills Centre mall, which for 50 years was the heart and hub of Canada's first planned, award-winning community. Don Mills was awarded a designation as a heritage site by the Ontario Heritage Foundation in 1997.

Known as a garden city, Don Mills was built as a neighbourhood where people could walk and cycle to shopping, work, and entertainment; it featured pedestrian

routes, rows of trees, green space, and a unique road system separating the neighbourhood from the city that would soon grow around it—exactly the type of community that urban planners, environmentalists, and politicians at all levels today tout as the ideal model community. Don Mills was the perfect example of this ideal community.

For the past several decades, the indoor mall was the heart of the Don Mills community and served as an invaluable lifeline for many residents, including the community's large concentration of seniors. In fact, among the many residences built around this mall are several seniors' residences, as well as homes for the disabled. Their proximity to the mall allowed the people who live there to retain their dignity and a degree of independence.

The children from nearby schools also frequented the mall every day for a place to eat lunch and meet friends. After school, many children would gather there and work on homework assignments.

When Cadillac Fairview announced in November of 2005 that the mall would be demolished the following spring to make way for an open-air strip mall and subsequent condominium development, the community was stunned. This mall had served the residents not only as a shopping centre, but also as a community centre. Don Mills had been designed that way. In fact, the Central Don Mills Secondary Plan, an important planning document, requires that with any change to the area, the function of the Don Mills Centre as a community centre must be strengthened. The Central Don Mills Secondary Plan also requires change to be managed in a way that retains and enhances the existing character of the area.

The demolition of the mall and the site's redevelopment as a strip plaza and condominium complex do not respect these requirements. The redevelopment entails not only a change in the nature of the shopping facility, but also aims at altering the demographics of the community—shoving aside those who built and nurtured the community over many decades.

The Don Mills residents gathered more than 5,000 signatures on a petition to maintain an indoor mall on the Don Mills Centre site. Many people wrote letters and e-mails, and made phone calls in an attempt to persuade Cadillac Fairview to halt the destruction of the community's central shopping mall and gathering place. Their pleas fell on deaf ears. The Don Mills Centre mall was demolished, leaving people in the community with no place to shop and gather. (As part of the development, a large number of healthy, mature trees were cut on and around the property, at a time when all levels of government are calling for tough action on greenhouse emissions and other environmental issues.)

Our residents' group, Don Mills Friends (Concerned Don Mills Residents for Maintaining the Don Mills Centre Indoor Mall), counts among its members Macklin Hancock, the master planner of the Don Mills community, as well as

Douglas Lee, the “Architect-in-Charge” for Don Mills, and Henry Fliess, a distinguished Don Mills architect who designed many homes in the area. All three gentlemen have made immeasurable contributions to making Don Mills the enviable neighbourhood that it is today, and all are deeply concerned that Cadillac Fairview's redevelopment of the Don Mills Centre site introduces a drastic and unacceptable change to the heart of Don Mills and thereby dramatically alters the way in which Canada's first planned community has functioned and was designed to function.

"Don Mills Friends should be commended for [its] efforts to save and protect the qualities of life that the Don Mills community is able to provide, and Mrs. Lee and I wish you every success in your endeavours," wrote Douglas Lee in a recent e-mail.

Messrs. Hancock, Lee, and Fliess, along with their wives, join their voices with the more than 5,000 signatures on our petition, requesting a new indoor mall to be built on the Don Mills Centre site, so that the people of our community can once again enjoy the way of life that made Don Mills such a unique, enviable model community.

For a well-established, progressive developer such as Cadillac Fairview, surely there must be a better way to produce shareholder growth than by destroying a community. Surely, there must be a way to include a new indoor mall in the redevelopment plans.

“Do you really want Cadillac Fairview to be known as the corporation that sucked the life out of Don Mills?” wrote Paul Zanettos, a young communications professional and member of Don Mills Friends, in his recent Internet blog on Don Mills, which can be accessed from the “Links” page on our website.

As teachers who teach our children to live with character, to treat others with civility and consideration, and to have respect for our seniors, as well for those who are physically or otherwise challenged, we thought you would like to be made aware of the plight of the Don Mills community. Surely, you would not want your pension fund investments to be managed in a way that hurts Canada's first planned community and forever changes the way it functioned and was designed to function.

We ask you, our teachers, to have a heart—a heart for the community that lost its heart and will not get it back—unless the developer is requested to put it back by its investors.

Please have a heart for Don Mills and request the OTPP to instruct CF to build a new indoor mall on the Don Mills Centre site! Robert G. Bertram, Executive Vice-President of Investments, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, is the OTPP representative on Cadillac Fairview's Board of Directors. Please write to him at

communications@otpp.com; phone 416-228-5900. Send a copy of your e-mail to Peter Sharpe, President and CEO of Cadillac Fairview, at peter.sharpe@cadillacfairview.com.

Thank you for your time and for your help.

**Don Mills Friends
Steering Committee:**

Tony Dickins, Chair

and:

- Mary Ampagoumian
- John Blair
- Eli Gabbay
- Simone Gabbay
- Eileen Gollert
- Peter Kapsalis
- Jeanetta Vickers
- Paul Zanettos

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