

February 27, 2010

**Don Mills Condominium Towers Approval:
The Ultimate Betrayal of Canada's Model Community**

"The city once again has proven unable or unwilling to thwart a strong developer and stand up for a neighbourhood and its residents." From [Ward33Forum.Blogspot](#).

This past week, we received the devastating news of Toronto City Council's approval of Cadillac Fairview's [proposal for tall condominium towers](#), accepting the bribe of a community centre, plus funds for the arena lands, on the Don Mills Centre site. We applaud Councillors Minnan-Wong, Ford, and Del Grande for their courage and integrity in standing up for Don Mills by voting against the settlement proposal and resisting the enormous pressure, from various sides, to accept the application.

It is profoundly disappointing and exceedingly disturbing that other councillors, many of whom gave passionate speeches *against* the application, stating excellent reasons why it was not acceptable, when it was first tabled and rejected at Council in October 2009, now turned around and supported it when little has changed: instead of two 26-storey towers, the plan is now for one 32- and one 24-storey tower (plus others, 10 to 16 storeys tall), with densities unchanged.

It is equally disturbing that the DMRI and the Ward 25 Councillor are aggressively supporting such massive densities and such tall buildings that will forever change the nature of Don Mills and turn it into a tall-building district. As a residents' group, and as a community's Councillor, one would expect them to work for their community instead of aligning themselves with a greed-driven developer.

Don Mills: A Community Betrayed

This Council decision constitutes the ultimate betrayal of Don Mills by those who were elected and appointed to be the keepers, guardians, and defenders of our neighbourhood and the [planning documents](#) that were put in place to protect our community's character and identity. It is also the beginning of the end of any kind of sensible planning in Don Mills, and perhaps even Toronto as a whole. If existing planning documents can be overturned without blinking an eye, and if a diligently prepared [Staff Report](#) issued by the Director, Community Planning, North York District, based on those planning documents, can be thrown out so easily, why bother with planning documents, and paying planners with our tax money, at all? Council voted down the first proposal with 26-storey heights based on those documents and reports in October, so how could they support a barely changed second proposal with 32-storey heights? Where is the logic in this? If planning laws are overturned and changed based on developers' whims and greed, we might as well have developers run this city, and vote for developers in the next election.

OMB: The Perpetual Excuse

Supporters of the application continually pointed to the OMB, stating that we had no choice and the OMB would approve the application if Council didn't, but without the requirement of the community centre. But if Cadillac Fairview were so sure of getting straightforward OMB approval for their outrageous application, why would they bother offering a \$17 million community centre to the community to whom they've given nothing up until now? They are not known for altruism unless it is guided by hidden self-serving motives. Why would they bother paying big dollars to hire top-

level, expensive architects to participate in the design reviews? (Not to mention that, as the [Ward33Forum.Blogspot](#) states so well, the design review panel was "staffed by those who profit from working with developers").

Newspapers have been full of stories over the past couple of years of communities winning their case at the OMB. We had a great case. We had a [Secondary Plan](#) that restricted building heights to 8 storeys and that was put in place to protect the character of the Don Mills Centre. Don Mills and Lawrence has a designation as a historic site by the Ontario government. If the DMRI had applied their considerable resources and energies and persuasion skills to put up a good fight, supported by the City, we would have had a great chance of winning at the OMB. Cadillac Fairview was well aware of this, which is why they tried so hard to get a settlement.

A Rose in a Thorn Field

We must remember that **Cadillac Fairview has taken everything from the community and given nothing back**. They ignored a petition of more than 5,000 signatures in 2006 to retain an indoor mall; they took away all our services, and now residents have to travel long distances to access shopping and services they used to have within walking distance; they are taking away our medical centre serving more than 22,000 patients. Now they're promising to plant a rose in a thorn field. But they need a community centre at least as much as we do—for their condominium residents—so who in their right mind believes that Cadillac Fairview is doing us a favour by promising this community centre?

Once again, we applaud the three councillors, Denzil Minnan-Wong, Rob Ford, and Mike Del Grande, for remembering that they are here to serve communities and not developers. We need more authentic public service leaders like them at City Hall!

"The determination in your heroic effort will permeate your mind and heart even after your success or failure is long forgotten." ~Sri Chinmoy

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