

THIS

by Doug Saunders

is what Glendon's latest residence is going to look like. It contains 33 apartments. Each apartment has two balconies. And two private elevators. With prices ranging from \$765,000 to \$2 million, it's not exactly what you'd call affordable student housing.

It's called the Chedington, and it's become practically a household name to Glendon students. While it won't quite be located on York's leafy campus at Bayview and Lawrence, it will be close enough to make a big impact. In fact, one of its walls will be only a few feet away from Glendon's gates.

So while Ken Field, the Chedington's millionaire builder, calls it "the most luxurious, the most noteworthy condominium in Toronto and likely in Canada," students and faculty at Glendon have other words for it — and for Field. In fact, in one of the most concerted battles York has ever seen, they spent almost four years and over \$40,000 fighting the project.

The inexorable influence of Canada's luckiest property developer proved overwhelming, though, and the Chedington's tenants may well be sitting smugly on their balconies and gazing over the campus by the end of next year.

Special Trees

For professor Don Willmott, who looks over Glendon from a much humbler perspective, this is a real shame.

"The project needed to be stopped to protect the whole area. There's nothing like it along the whole length of the upper Don Valley," Willmott says, gesturing across the campus as he walks to his tiny ground floor office in York Hall.

"It's outrageous. We've advertised Glendon as a place where the buildings are no taller than the trees."

And at Glendon, the trees are everything. The small campus is perched on the edge of the sprawling Don Valley, in one of Toronto's largest unspoiled areas. If you stand on top of Glendon's tallest building and look north or east, you'll see nothing but miles of treetops.

This is what attracted Willmott to Glendon in 1967. A specialist in ecological issues, it took little convincing to bring him to the bucolic campus with its 150-year-old trees.

"I couldn't resist this place," he says. "There are some very special trees here."

Twenty years later, in 1987, a group of students told Willmott they'd seen a sign just off campus announcing a zoning amendment. Willmott set out to find out what it meant.

He didn't know it at the time, but Willmott's world was about to collide head-on with the considerably different world of Ken Field.

Two Worlds

Don Willmott, you see, is the kind of guy who walks around campus with a tape

measure clipped to his belt. His unadorned office still contains the same spartan furnishings it was supplied with in 1967. He spends his spare time driving around on Northern Ontario roads in his four-wheel-drive Toyota pickup.

Ken Field spends much of his spare time on the tennis court, swimming pool or discotheque of his Georgian-style home, aboard his 36-foot boat, or, until a recent serious accident, on the world's ski slopes, according to a *Financial Post* profile.

(Field hasn't responded to regular requests by *excalibur* for interviews. While his secretary attributes this to his ski injury, he was healthy enough to return to his office in August).

In June of 1988, Field announced he'd take a one-year break from the property business "to reflect." This reflection was made possible by Field's sale of his stake in Bramalea Ltd. to the Bronfmann-owned Trizec Corp. — for \$100 million.

His timing couldn't have been better. In 1974, at 30 years of age, Field and a partner had purchased Bramalea from its British holding company for 86 cents a share. When he sold his stake in 1988, the shares were valued at \$25 each. Today, in the wake of the disastrous collapse of Toronto's real estate market, Bramalea's shares are selling for \$1.07 each.

As president and CEO of Bramalea during the prosperous 1970s and 80s, Field had made a profit of almost 10,000 per cent on the \$1.1 million he'd originally invested in the company, through a bank loan underwritten by his millionaire father.

But, by many accounts, Field hadn't been entirely comfortable running an enormous real estate company. "Kenny came from a moneyed family," another former Bramalea executive told the *Financial Post* in 1988. "He stepped in at the top and never really developed the sensitivity that comes from working for others."

During his period of "reflection," he created Edifice Group, his own private company. And one of the first Edifice projects was to enter a partnership with the Fingold family, who were attempting to make some money off the spacious grounds of their family mansion, which is perched on the edge of Bayview Glen right beside Glendon College.

Before Field came along, the land had been re-zoned and a condo project proposed. Field added his own touch: he'd make the Chedington into a virtual palace, and market it to the wealthy families in the neighbourhood as an urbane alternative to their unwieldy houses.

Hoodwinked

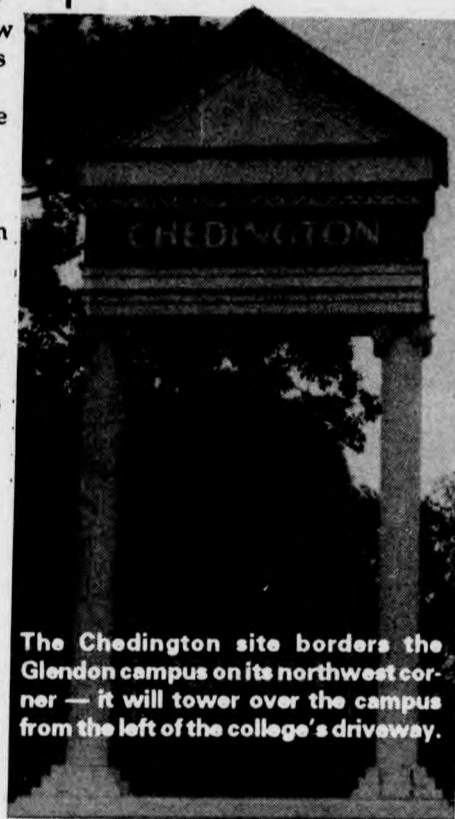
At around the same time, a small group of Glendon students and professors were discovering that they'd been, in the words of Willmott, "hoodwinked."

Before Field arrived on the scene, the Chedington developers had met with York University officials at the Downsview campus. After some unspecified negotiations, the York administration gave the plan their stamp of approval.

At a meeting with Glendon students, the York administrators presented the plan as a *fait accompli*. According to the Glendon newspaper *Pro Tem*, the administrators appeared bewildered by the students' angry reactions. When asked about their opposition, Peter Struck, York's vice president of physical resources, would only comment: "It's a point of view."

"It just didn't occur to them that we wouldn't want a big monster building there," Willmott says now. "They never saw the visibility point of view."

When Glendon was built in the early 1960s, local residents had taken action to keep the buildings down to a maximum of three storeys. The Chedington is to be a nine-storey



The Chedington site borders the Glendon campus on its northwest corner — it will tower over the campus from the left of the college's driveway.