

# north york: city au art

## mayor says, "margie, can we join the european common market yet?"

by Letitia Tendentious

Thousands of years ago, Egyptian Pharaohs had great pyramids built as tombs as eternal monuments to their exalted lives. Today, politicians build sports complexes and centres for the performing arts for much the same reason. Only they don't have the grace to die first.

Last Thursday, it was announced that the Zeidler Roberts Partnership/Architects will design North York's new Performing Arts Centre. The Centre is to be situated on Yonge north of Sheppard, surrounded by those two other cultural landmarks: the Madison Centre and the Hollywood Centre shopping malls. The Performing Arts Centre is to be completed in 1992, at which point Mayor Mel Last (man) "of the Big Time Spenders" will undoubtedly be trying to convince Margaret Thatcher to allow North York to join the European Common Market.

The City with heart is about to become The City with Art.

The Performing Arts Centre will have three performance spaces. The main

theatre will seat over 1,500 and be used mainly for splashy, Broadway-style musicals (the 23rd local revival of *Cats*, for instance).

There will also be a recital hall with 700 seats (allowing North York's orchestra, which has had to play a lot of outdoor venues because it didn't have a home, to become The Symphony that Came in From the Cold). The final space is a 250-seat theatre to be used by local community and professional groups, many of which have trouble finding performance space in downtown Toronto.

The cost of the Performing Arts Centre is estimated at \$43.5 million. This is the equivalent of the 8.7 million \$5 food packages from the North York Harvest Food Bank. (Of course, North York has no hungry people, only "Nutritionally disadvantaged.") It could be worse: \$43.5 million is only 1/10th of a Sky-Dome.

Ontario Hydro bought the space from the city, which it will lease back to North York for 99 years. It must be comforting to

the North York establishment to know that if there are power shortages in the future, they'll still be able to get their fix on Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Ontario Hydro also has an adjacent seven acres,



on which it plans to develop two million square feet of commercial office and retail space. This concentration of high-rise malls and offices shouldn't be surprising: North York does have the

highest percentage of personalized license plates in Canada (second only to Hollywood in the world). And, downtown North York does have one advantage over downtown Toronto: there is no lake to block the view.

The announcement was made at a reception attended by local politicians, corporate sponsors, theatre people, journalists and Don Harron. The journalists were easy to spot: napkins from free "refreshments" and hors d'oeuvres piled up before them like deficit predictions before a finance minister. The theatre people stood out because they wore comfortable clothing, a definite fashion risk at these functions.

The corporate sponsors all appeared to have grey hair. (Is it a natural law? Union rules? Perhaps guilt from the knowledge of how much bad theatre they're responsible for weighs heavily on them? If I wanted to be a corporate sponsor for the arts, would I have to dye my hair silver? If I didn't would a theatre refuse to accept my donat-

okay, let's not be silly!) Sometimes, it was difficult to tell the corporate sponsors from the politicians, although one simple rule seemed to work: the politicians tended to talk about business, the businessmen tended to talk about politics.

Don Harris tried hard not to be Charlie Farquharson.

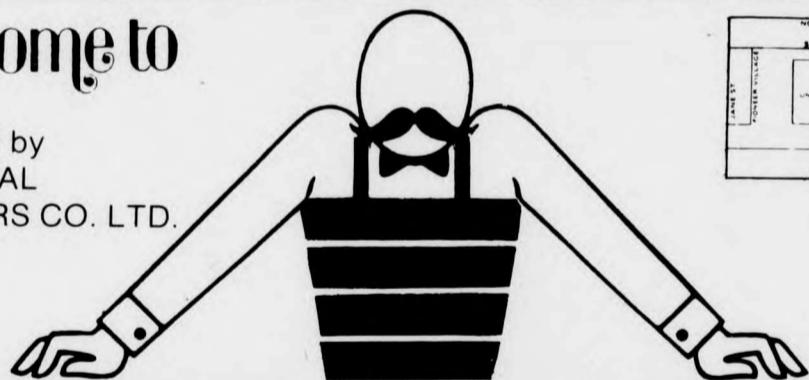
According to Mayor Lastman, the creation of the North York Performing Arts Centre will be "the greatest cultural event to happen in Canada since Karen Kain put on ballet slippers." Karen Kain's ballet slippers were unavailable for comment. Neither was Peter DoNotKnow, which was even more incredible.

Mayor Lastman also announced that an auction would be held to name the facility. You can buy the opportunity to have your name on millions of tickets, in all the Centre's advertising and wherever else the Centre is mentioned.

Start saving your pennies now, kids: opening bids are expected to be around \$2 million.

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