

By LORNE MANLY

For years, York has waited in vain for the provincial government to provide enough funding for the University to complete its physical development. Finally, York is in a position to tackle the legacy of the last 14 years. For in 1972,

the province placed a moratorium on the construction of new physical facilities in Ontario universities. York was left with a half-finished university and very little hope for the government to resume funding anywhere near the pre-1972 levels. The original Master Plan, completed in 1963, was an ambitious project, calling for facilities of Engineering, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Medicine, a teaching hospital and 12 colleges on a campus designed for 15,000 students.

Prepared by University Planners, Architects and Consulting Engineers (UPACE) for the BOG, the Master Plan even took into account weather conditions, contrary to popular belief York's design was based on universities in Southern California. "The frequent inclement weather, wind, rain, snow and intense summer sun make scattered buildings joined by long unprotected walks undesirable," the Master Plan stated. "Protection from the weather, as well as from motor traffic, is necessary. . . This protection can best be achieved by closely-spaced buildings connected by covered links where possible."

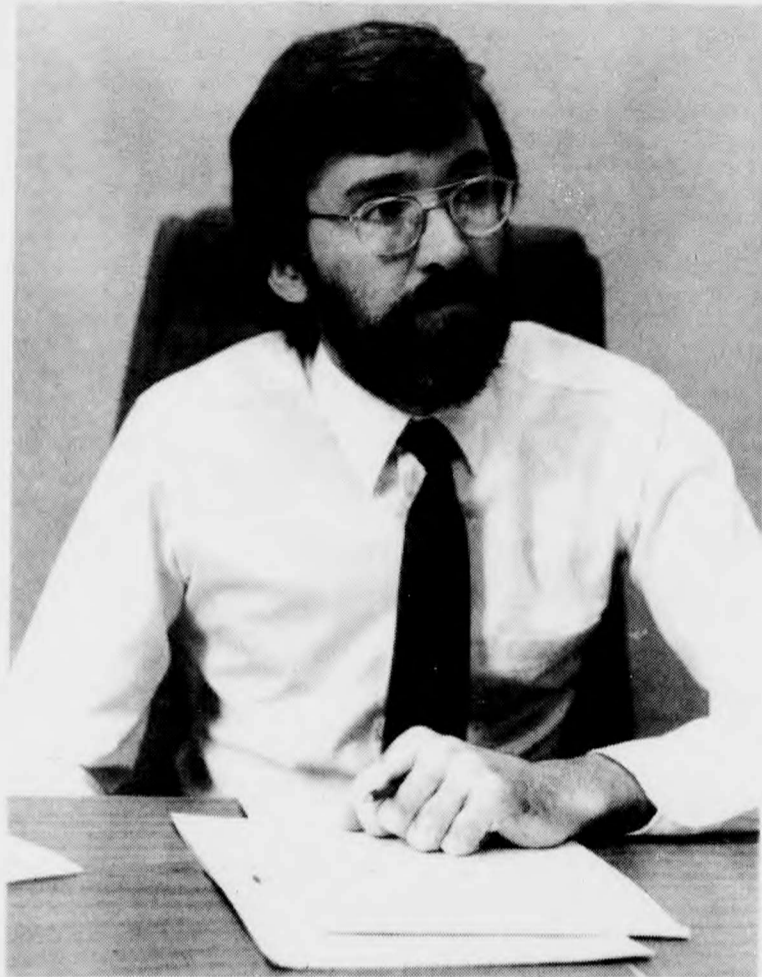
That York is far from this ideal does not take very long to realize. Complaints run rampant about the inhospitableness of the campus in the winter months. Trek from outlying bus stops and parking lots, even trips from Ross to Stong, are the bane of everyone's existence at York.

Add to this the pressure of more than 30,000 students on the Keele campus (the 15,000 limit was raised to 25,000 in 1969), and York is not a very comfortable place to be. Some new construction has taken place in the last 14 years as the government periodically targets funds for a specific building (although never the full amount). But York still has a pressing need for an additional 500,000 net assignable square feet of space (the equivalent of seven buildings the size of the Lumbers building) for new classrooms, labs, offices, and student and faculty services. The estimated cost of these new facilities and other campus improvements is \$60 million.

Waste of time

Waiting for the government to provide the needed funding has proven to be a waste of time and convinced the Administration and Board of Governors to begin taking matters into their own hands. They turned to York's abundant land resources as a means of raising money. York's forays into the land development business confirmed the need for a planning framework that linked the physical, financial and academic concerns of the University towards future use of York lands. The vehicle to accomplish this task is the York University Development

Grand plans for York lands



GREG SPEARN: Spearn is the vice-president of the York University Development Corporation, which is in the midst of preparing a new Campus Concept Plan to guide York's future development.

Corporation (YUDC)—(For history of land development at York before the YUDC—see box).

Philip Lapp, the author of *Physical Planning Requirements at York*, which recommended the formation of the development corporation, is president and Chief Executive Officer, dividing his time between YUDC and his own consulting firm.

Hired on as vice-president was Greg Spearn who brought his experience in real estate and land development to the job. Recruited from Carma Developers Ltd. in Calgary,

where he was general manager for southern Alberta, Spearn is excited by the possibilities the campus offers. "There's a tremendous opportunity here to capitalize on the value of land to make a significant impact at York," Spearn said. "Academic programme enhancement, adding space, life and vitality (are possible with new development)."

One of the first tasks on YUDC's agenda is to come up with a new Campus Concept Plan and development strategy. To start the process

YUDC invited 18 consulting firms to outline proposals on this work and received 12 submissions in return. The IBI Group, which worked on the rail lands project, was the firm finally chosen for the \$100,000 contract.

According to Lapp, there is a pressing need for a new campus plan. "We have a plan that in many ways is obsolete," Lapp said. "For example, York has no Faculty of Engineering or Medicine. We still have the guidelines but with serious voids."

'Plan too rigid'

Larry Sherman, a partner at IBI who is responsible for co-ordinating the York consultation process, agrees, claiming that "the Master Plan was too rigid; it didn't foresee circumstances York has had to deal with, in terms of politics and economy."

In order to create, in Spearn's words, "a plan that is dynamic; that can change with changing needs," the YUDC is undertaking a three phase consultation period to elicit opinion from the University and development communities. YUDC has set up a 32-person Advisory Council to give the corporation's Board of Directors a means of rapid consultation with all the major constituencies that have interests in any campus development. It is also an expression of a fundamental principle behind the YUDC that both Lapp and Spearn point out: that any development be based on intensive consultation with the "stakeholders" in the community, such as students, staff and faculty, and not be at odds with the social and academic goals of the University.

In the first phase of this process, which began in September and ends this month, YUDC is, according to Spearn, "looking for general views of industry (on the possibilities York's lands present) and key groups in the University." Questionnaires circulated in *Excalibur* and other campus publications as well as open meetings for staff, faculty and students are among the methods the

YUDC is using to solicit views to what the future character of York's campus will be.

Spearn is aiming for IBI to produce some plans on paper by the beginning of January after taking into account the consultation of phase one. Then the second stage, "where the meat of it is," can begin. The University community will be presented with a number of alternative concepts to review while another round of physical analysis will commence. (This physical analysis will study a number of areas affecting future development at York—traffic and parking analysis, regional economic analysis, market research, wind patterns and geography of the campus to name a few.)

From the feedback generated in this phase (which runs through February) "the planners will then formulate a final concept plan and implementation strategy," Spearn said, "which will be recommended to the YUDC after final review by the Advisory Council." The YUDC then hopes it will be in a position to take advantage of York's greatest asset for capital development—the 300 acres of the total 600 acres presently underused.

"What we're doing as a team," Spearn said, "is trying to put options on the table in a rational and quantified way." To Lapp it is a way to obtain a window on the real estate market. "Real estate values are very high," Lapp said. "We owe it to ourselves to see what kind of return we can get from a piece of land. We have a surplus under any means—even if we grew to 200,000 students." According to Spearn, "the Campus Concept Plan will give us all the options."

Housing different

The four major uses YUDC envisions for York lands' development are: the housing dimension; companies providing goods and services complementary to the University (such as a hotel and conference centre); research facilities that dovetail with an academic programme; and firms or institutions that may have no specific service or academic tie but are not offensive to the University.

Of this land, "we would, primarily and fundamentally, like to lease everything," Spearn said, for in that way York can retain control of the land. Housing, however, "is a problem area. If you want ownership housing, you give up control."

"Housing is different than other uses," Spearn said, "as it already discounts the value of the land. You'd be getting an interest rate on the value of the land. It may be an income stream but it's not as significant if the land is sold," Spearn provides as an example a piece of land that under a land lease would have a value of \$300,000. If that same piece of land is sold it's worth between \$400,000 and \$700,000. According to Spearn, this differential is no where as great in the other uses YUDC forsees for York.

The YUDC regards housing as an integral part of future plans for the campus and hopes to have a wide range of housing options. "Ownership housing is only part of the residential precinct," Spearn said. "Rental, student housing—the whole spectrum—as it's important to have that mix."

In regard to the other uses of York lands Spearn says that "the selling option is a small part of the attack. We would only consider selling land if it outweighs the gain from holding the land. It would have to have a big enough impact to solve some of our problems."

Spearn is optimistic that YUDC's work will be successful. "The basic objective is right," Spearn said, "we'll bring benefits to York in many, many ways."

From Sentinel to YUDC

The history of land development at York

By LORNE MANLY

Since the 1972 moratorium on new construction, York has found itself in worsening financial circumstances. Yet instead of relying on the government to alleviate the situation, York began looking for ways to raise money for capital construction. The most obvious method was to use the excess lands on the Keele campus.

The first major commercial initiative to develop York property took place in 1981 when the Sentinel Co-operative Housing Project was proposed. A feasibility study of the non-profit co-operative housing project (on 15.5 acres at the southern end of the campus) was launched by the York University Faculty Association (YUFA) on a \$38,000 grant from the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC). The housing was to be designed for family occupancy but a minimum of 25 percent of the 956 bedrooms were to be set aside for students.

After gaining approval at all levels of the University, though, the proposal died when it reached the Board of Governors (BOG). Philip Lapp, the acting chairperson of the BOG's Property and Buildings Committee said the reasons for turning down the proposal were two-fold—York's total return and

the way the University would get the money were both unacceptable.

The BOG considered the \$3.2 million return as too small and with "the mismatch between dollars and land (in the two phases), the University was taking undue risk," Lapp said. In the first phase, 12.5 acres were to be sold for an average yield of \$154,285 per acre, while in the second phase the other three acres would yield an average of \$209,112. In addition, according to Lapp's report, York was in danger of a 25 percent reduction in its per acre return if Sentinel could not obtain satisfactory financing for the second closing.

The University then hired the firm Marshall Macklin Monaghan (MMM) to conduct a comprehensive land study to investigate the marketability of several areas of the campus. MMM looked at eight sites on the outer edges of York and tried to determine the income that could be obtained by leasing the lands.

The study concluded that there was a market for York lands but cautioned against rushing into the land development business. MMM suggested that York gain some experience in this field first.

Both the MMM lands study and the Sentinel housing project pointed out the need for a plan-

ning framework that "spelled out criteria covering land or building usage, together with physical and financial guidelines against which future proposals could be assessed," Lapp's report stated.

As a first step, the BOG formed a Strategic Planning Committee in October 1983 to link the academic, physical and financial plans of the University. Then, in the fall of 1984, Lapp, the chair of this committee, was asked by the acting President of the University, William Found, to conduct a study of the physical planning requirements at York. Lapp looked at the history of land-use planning at York from the Master Plan to the formation of the Strategic Planning Committee in 1983. He also researched the land-use history of other universities, both in Canada and the United States, that had planning requirements similar to York's.

Lapp reported back in early 1985 calling for a development corporation to be created so it could begin the process for a Campus Concept study that would take into account factors such as York's enrolment, research thrusts, and how the community at York envisioned the campus. In July the York University Development Corporation (YUDC) was born.