

# Community speaks out over proposed development

By GARRY MARR

York's 22 acre sale of land at the Keele campus will generate substantial capital funding, but to local residents the development represents an increased strain on community resources.

Last fall York decided to sell off three per cent of its capital land assets to Bramalea Ltd. The deal guarantees York \$34 million at a time in which the university is trying to finance its own new developments.

If Bramalea gets approval from North York Council for two and half times coverage, the price tag on the land will go up to \$42 million. This figure doesn't include additional profits York stands to make by participating in the gross revenues from the sale of the units.

York University Development Corporation (YUDC) President Greg Spearn, in calling the sale a wise decision said, "York agonized over whether it could part with three per cent of its land assets to support its capital venture." He added, "We decided that if we were going to sell, let's not impose conditions [on the sale] and let's maximize profit."

Influential in the University's decision was the fact that the land, located in northwest corner of the Niagara Blvd. and the Murray Ross intersection, is far removed from the centre of the University and does not figure in York's development plans. The Board of Governors has also adopted a policy against any further sales of university owned land.

But all of this does little to ease the concerns of local residents and politicians, who say the area is already too congested and cannot afford any further development.

Ralph Cinelli, President of the Jane-Finch Fight Back Committee, says that while he understands the University's funding problems, the area is already "overflowing." He cites the York-Finch Hospital, which was designed to handle 35,000 emergency patients a year but cur-



**MORE MONEY, BUT MORE TRAFFIC:** York has sold 22 acres of land to Bramalea Ltd. The land is scheduled for development which has area residents up in arms. But the University is guaranteed \$34 million from the sale.

rently handles 93,000, as an example of how resources in the area are already overtaxed.

"There are 62 high-rises between Jane and Finch, and Jane and Steeles; the community is already the most congested area of North York," says Cinelli. "We are not radicals and not against good development, but only what the community can handle." He says the community has been taken for granted for too long and they are prepared to fight

this development right up to Queen's Park.

Ward 5 Councillor Maria Augimeri says she opposes not only the development, but the sale as well. "I am inherently opposed to universities being able to sell off parts of themselves to private bidders," says Augimeri, who sees the sale as a form of prostitution.

Augimeri agrees that universities in Ontario are underfunded, but

feels that "two wrongs won't make a right." She also agrees with Cinelli's opinion that the area cannot handle more development.

"The people I represent don't want it," says Augimeri. "Their basements get flooded because of a lack of sewage capacity, another 1600 units will only add to the problem." Augimeri is presently organizing a meeting for September 22, at C.W. Jefferys High School, to bring together interested parties.

She says that she is not interested in a compromise to the situation, whereby Bramalea would agree to less coverage on the land. She expressed hope that the project would be disbanded, but this depends on the results of the next election.

Augimeri is not seeking re-election in her ward, but instead has opted to run for Metro Council, whose members will be directly elected for the first time in November. She stated that the 22 acre development is a major issue in her election platform.

But the application for coverage of the area has not yet reached North York Council, and probably won't until next year. North York is presently examining a study done by the YUDC that says the area can support increased development. Don Newman, who is planning commissioner for North York, says his department is examining the university's proposal "through the medium of a secondary plan."

Sheila K. White, community resource director for North York Mayor Mel Lastman, is taking a "wait and see" attitude on the development. She did acknowledge that with more universities facing financial hardship, this type of venture is becoming "a way of the future for universities to finance themselves."

The proposal for development is expected to be put forward in February, but there is a question as to whether some concessions may be made by Bramalea and York. Ward 3 Councillor Peter Li Pretti feels that developers should be forced to give something back to local residents, whose resources are about to be further strained.

"York does not have a wall around its campus, it must take people in the community into consideration," says Li Pretti.

Spear's position is that the YUDC did take area concerns into consideration before agreeing to the sale. "Who better than York can judge who they want their neighbours to be for the next 100 years?" said Spearn.

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