

# Glendon rez with \$2 million rooms

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building — and one with 9 1/2-foot ceilings on every floor.

The Glendonites must have felt alone in their opposition to the project. They did have the support of Roseann Runte, the newly-arrived principal of Glendon. But, unlike York's central administration, she did not have the authority to oppose the development.

Fighting property developers is always an expensive proposition. The students, stuck for cash, resorted to an act of unprecedented ingenuity: they'd raise the money from their own tuition fees.

Student groups often collect money by adding special charges onto tuition fees. The York Federation of Students, for example, collects \$19.20 per full-time student; *excalibur* collects \$4.00. To institute such fees, students have to hold, and win, a referendum among undergraduates.

Nobody had ever thought of using this system to pay legal fees to fight a battle against a project supported by the university itself. But something always attracts Glendon students to a good fight: they won the referendum by a 70 per cent margin in April of 1988, giving themselves the right to collect \$5 per student for two years.

This would eventually provide the students \$20,517 — almost half the money they'd spend in legal fees. The rest came from private donations.

In early 1989, the Chedington project went before a public hearing with the Ontario Municipal Board, which rules on contentious property development.

## Bad Faith

It was clearly going to be an uphill battle for the students. The Chedington, by this time controlled by Field's Edifice Group, was bolstered by four expensive studies and a team of lawyers.

And the students weren't getting any help from their university. York President Harry Arthurs appeared before the Board, only to announce that he was taking no position.

Days later, the students discovered that York faced a major conflict of interest: one of the Edifice lawyers was also negotiating with York in the sale of Downsview campus land to Bramalea.

John Sullivan, the student leading the opposition, said he was "offended" by this revelation. "We've been negotiating in good faith with York while all along they were negotiating with the same solicitor [we've] been fighting."

President Arthurs, when asked by *Pro Tem* if the conflict worried him, answered: "Good heavens no... Two third parties just happened to choose the same solicitor."

"I just don't believe that Arthurs would mislead us like that," Glendon Principal Runte said.

In May, 1989, the Municipal Board released a ten-page ruling. It praised the "good and sound planning" on the "exceptional site," and ruled that the proposed high-

risedid not represent "visual pollution" and that development could go ahead.

## York's Flip-Flop

The story wasn't over, though. Just as the Glendon students felt most dispirited and defeated, they got a call from the York administration.

It seemed that all of a sudden York had realized that something was terribly wrong with this project. Perhaps it was because Field's company was making regular changes to the project (at some point it had become two buildings, one to be built in the future), and marketing it aggressively to area residents.

Or maybe it was because officials learned that the university likely wouldn't be making any money off the project. It had been assumed that the Chedington developers would want to divert the Glendon driveway and run plumbing under the campus — both rights which York could sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars. This no longer seemed to be in Field's plans.

In any case, the university suddenly wanted to fight the project in North York city hall, and wanted the students and their professors to regroup.

"I had felt we were let down by the university," Willmott says now, "and therefore we had given up after the [Municipal Board] hearing. Then we were virtually invited to get organized."

"It especially annoys me that we put so much effort the first time around when the university was against us," he adds.

Using York's own lawyers, the university argued that the new Chedington was not the same project that the Municipal Board had approved.

And Mary Lynn Reimer, York's master planner, used her own diagrams and plans to convince local residents and North York politicians that the project would not be the aesthetic travesty its developers claimed.

Field also went on the offensive. He argued that the new building was still within the envelope permitted by the Municipal Board de-

cision.

And Field also lobbied local residents aggressively, making presentations to the same ratepayer groups that Reimer and the students were talking to.

The battle finally came before a committee of North York council in July of 1991. The chambers were packed with opponents, supporters, lawyers and planners. The battle proved anticlimactic, though: Field's plan was passed unanimously, although York's objections inspired a few minor amendments (such as a clause prohibiting satellite dishes and other protuberances on the roof).

Any opposition is now out of the hands of either the Glendon students or the York officials. Although Reimer says "there are still some legal instruments" the university can use, neither she nor York's lawyers have had their calls returned by Edifice.

"I'm hoping that we will hear from them," Reimer says.

## Paris in a Bottle

At Glendon, though, the issue is still very much alive. In fact, it's hard to avoid. Last year bulldozers entered the Chedington site to move some

enormous trees out of the way. The students, characteristically, organized a noisy protest (Willmott points out that at least one of the trees is now quite obviously dead).

Glendon Principal Runte says that Field no longer has any legal obligation to communicate with York — but he might just want to, if only to protect his future tenants from the anti-authoritarian proclivities of Glendon's students.

"They may want to ask for assistance with landscaping," she says. "If there is some kind of barrier between them and us, it should probably make their residents happier too."

After almost five years, this is what the battle has been reduced to. Most of the students involved have graduated by now, and Willmott and his colleagues are resigned, if bitter. Everyone at Glendon is waiting for the construction crews to arrive.

Does Runte feel things would have worked out differently if the York administration had supported her students from the outset?

"There's an old French saying," she says, after a thoughtful pause: "with enough ifs, you could put Paris in a bottle."



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