

Marilyn Toft - UofT Back Campus

TE 24.83.4

**From:** "Jane Seto" <jane.seto@utoronto.ca>  
**To:** <councillor\_crisanti@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_dford@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_holyday@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_lindsay\_luby@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_milczyn@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_grimes@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_mammoliti@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_perruzza@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_augimeri@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_pasternak@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_nunziata@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_digiorgio@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_doucette@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_perks@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_colle@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_stintz@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_palacio@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_mcmahon@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_carroll@toronto.ca>, <'councillor\_minnan-wong@toronto.ca'@bureau92.ns.utoronto.ca>, <councillor\_berardinetti@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_crawford@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_thompson@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_debaeremaeker@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_delgrande@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_kelly@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_lee@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_cho@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_ainslie@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_moeser@toronto.ca>, <mayor\_ford@toronto.ca>, <clerk@toronto.ca>  
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**Subject:** UofT Back Campus  
**Attachments:** assuheritageletter.pdf

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 CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
 SECRETARIAT SECTION

Dear Members of Toronto City Hall,

We are the Executive of the Arts and Science Students' Union (ASSU) at the University of Toronto, representing over 23,000 full-time, undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Science at U of T. It has come to our attention that council will be discussing a motion to make the Back Campus field at the St. George campus a heritage landscape. We strongly encourage each one of you to vote in favor of this proposal. Attached with this e-mail, you will find a letter detailing our reasons as to why we believe council should support this proposal.

Sincerely,

The Arts and Science Students Union Executive

Arts and Science Students' Union  
 University of Toronto  
 100 St. George Street, Rm 1068  
 Toronto, ON M5S 3G3

416.978.4903

[students.assu@utoronto.ca](mailto:students.assu@utoronto.ca)



ARTS AND SCIENCE STUDENTS' UNION • University of Toronto  
Sidney Smith Hall • Room 1068 • 100 St. George Street, Toronto, ON M5S 3G3  
Tel: 416.978.4903 Fax: 416.971.2161 E.mail:students.assu@utoronto.ca

To the members of Toronto City Council:

We, the executive of the Arts and Science Students' Union are writing to you today in regards to a proposal to designate the Back Campus field of the University of Toronto a heritage landscape. The Arts and Science Students' Union (ASSU) represents more than 23,000 full-time, undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Science at U of T. ASSU urges City Council to approve this proposal.

Currently, the Back Campus field is made up of natural grass turf and has been for over one hundred years. The field is used by students, staff, and faculty for a variety of recreational activities; from having a picnic, to walking one's dog, to engaging in various competitive sports. That being said, due to heavy use throughout the year, the field is sometimes in poor shape which can lead to injuries to student athletes, a concern ASSU recognizes and takes seriously.

In preparation for the Pan Am games to be held in 2015, the University plans to spend 9.5 million dollars to remove the natural grass and replace it with artificial turf. The University argues that changing the field to turf will make it more accessible for students and community members, and that students will be less prone to injure themselves on an artificial surface. These arguments, while compelling, have only been offered after a coalition of students, faculty, and community members made substantive criticisms of the project. Students fear that once the field is turfed, it will become like the Varsity Centre – U of T's primary outdoor facility used for athletics; where public access is restricted and only available for the playing of certain Varsity sports.

Students have reason to be suspicious. The whole process under which the University has undergone to turf the back campus field has lacked accountability and transparency. In 2011, the administration commissioned a project planning group which would report to Governing Council on how to convert the back campus field to turfed pitches for field hockey. This report was never released to the public, but was discussed and passed in Governing Council a year later. All the discussions that occurred in Governing Council in regards to the report were done *in camera*. Not only have students not been significantly consulted, the university has opted to withhold relevant information pertaining to the project. The administration assures students that the field will be open to all, and that this move to turf back campus is not being done in haste for the Pan Am Games. If this is the case, why do they choose not to release the relevant facts and details?

By making Back Campus a heritage landscape, the University would be pressured to reconsider its plans for turfing and since heritage sites must be properly preserved, undergo a more critical process on how to properly preserve the field that takes into account the views of students, athletes, faculty, and community members. In light of this, we therefore hope that you will vote to make back campus a heritage landscape.

Sincerely,

The Arts and Science Students' Union Executive