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Toronto and East York Community Council

## **Re: Jay Macpherson Green and the Relocation of the Enbridge Gas Distribution District Station**

Dear Community Council Members,

Jay Macpherson Green is a small, yet vibrant neighbourhood green space that is well enjoyed by the local community. The Green is named for Jay Macpherson, a Governor General's Award-winning Canadian lyric poet and scholar, who taught at University College for 40 years and was hired at a time when there were not many women professors. Jay Macpherson lived in the Yorkville neighbourhood for over 40 years and was an active member of the Avenue-Bay-Cottingham (ABC) Resident's Association. The park is situated on the corner of Avenue Rd. and MacPherson Avenue. The Green faces residential homes on the MacPherson side.

In January of 2017, Enbridge Gas Distribution performed upgrades to their District Station, located in the right-of-way adjacent to Jay Macpherson Green. The District Station, which had previously been buried, was brought above-ground. Enbridge Gas Distribution raised the Station to address Ministry of Labour safety regulations regarding workers in confined spaces. The District Station was also significantly enlarged to account for current and forecasted natural gas usage.

The new, above-ground District Station is a visual blight on the narrow Green frontage. It is a massive structure, with a footprint measuring just over 2 x 3 metres, and soaring 1.5 metres in height. While technically located in the public right-of-way, it also sits within a grassy area that is commonly perceived as the green space entrance. Further exacerbating this issue, is the fact that affected residents were inadequately notified of the installation. The local community's ability to raise their concerns, and mitigate the aesthetic impact of the Station prior to implementation, were effectively negated.

I have engaged in multiple meetings with the ABC Resident's Association, Enbridge Gas Distribution, and City staff from the Transportation, Parks, and Planning divisions regarding this egregious visual blight. All have agreed that the notification process regarding utility placement was outrageously flawed. Our efforts have led to positive outcomes, such as Enbridge Gas voluntarily adopting improved notification processes; and the City's Transportation Services Division adopting enhanced guidelines for utility placement

While it is heartening that these improved processes will affect future utility installations, there remains the concern around the Jay Macpherson Green District Station in particular. The ABC Residents Association has requested that the station be moved to the rear of the green space, where it will be far less visible. After several months of negotiation, Enbridge Gas Distribution has agreed to cooperate with this request. Enbridge Gas has investigated feasibility of relocation, alongside Transportation staff, and have found that the Station can be moved successfully into the extreme southwest corner of the green space.

In order to move forward in relocating the Station, it will be necessary to enact a permanent easement over the green space. This process will require an Official Plan Amendment to ensure that Enbridge Gas will have ongoing access to their equipment. Parks staff, including the General Manager, have been consulted on this matter, and have agreed that the community will be better served with the District Station relocated to the rear of the green space. This proposed resolution follows 16 months of negotiations with all parties and Divisions involved. We are now, finally, in a place to move forward.

In order to answer to the concerns of the local residents, and ensure that this memorial green space remains a worthy tribute to the citizen for whom it is named, I believe it is necessary to have Planning staff take decisive steps to restore and enhance this beloved community asset. I therefore recommend the following:

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Toronto and East York Community Council direct the Acting Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, in consultation with appropriate staff from Transportation Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and any other relevant City staff to determine the appropriate location for the Enbridge Gas Distribution District Station Box which is to be relocated from the Macpherson Avenue right-of-way into Jay Macpherson Green Park at 255 Avenue Road and bring forward any required Official Plan Amendment to a statutory public meeting under the Planning Act after holding a community meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Kristyn Wong-Tam, City Councillor  
Ward 27, Toronto Centre-Rosedale  
Chair, Disability, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee