



May 1, 2021

12th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Marilyn Toft

Re: TE24.96 Supporting Canada Square Working Group Process with Additional Information

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of City Council,

FoNTRA represent over thirty residents associations in Midtown Toronto, North Toronto and North York.

Yonge and Eglinton is designated as a “Growth Centre” and has become an extremely “successful” one at that, i.e. it has far exceeded the population targets set. However this growth has occurred at the expense of quality of life issues, amid deficiencies in community services that are increasingly apparent to the residents and neighbours.

Most recently the City is reviewing an application for the Canada Square site, a lynchpin to the whole area, given its location at the crossing of the subway and soon to be completed LRT, and the fast developing residential neighbourhoods spreading out from all four corners. The application by Oxford Properties simply cannot be treated like a regular development application given the many factors to be addressed.

How this site is to be redeveloped is of critical importance to the Yonge Eglinton Neighbourhood and to the City.

This is the last large redevelopment site at Yonge and Eglinton West, and including most of the block bounded by Duplex and Berwick. It includes the bus bay area on public land. Its redevelopment must provide the missing “town centre” functions for the significantly increased population in the neighbourhood. Given the current over capacity on the Yonge subway line and the added ridership from the 2022 opening of the LRT, the redevelopment must provide for needed transportation requirements for the subway/LRT intersection below as well as reduced bus traffic. The impacts of what happens here will affect the rest of the City.

A special planning process is required for this site that ensures that all the relevant issues are addressed.

Yonge/Eglinton is designated a Growth Centre like the Downtown. The Midtown in Focus initiative, developed to plan for this and with community participation, provided a comprehensive framework for regulating the size of development and ensuring the provision of community services and open space.

The importance of the Canada Square property is recognized in the provincially-approved OPA 405. Sections 5.5.3 and 9.1.1 of that OPA call for a comprehensive study of the site prior to considering any revisions to existing by-laws, specifying that “any redevelopment of City-owned lands will advance and/or include public priorities, including but not limited to parkland, affordable housing, community service facilities and first responder stations”. The Province intervention to amend the Yonge/Eglinton planning policies and bylaw has overridden the provision of the many needed community services in the area for the substantially increasing population.

We are pleased that this special planning study will now be undertaken. But sufficient time must be allowed to ensure that the resulting planning framework for the Canada Square site will address the issues and provides adequate directions.

The Canada Square redevelopment must help provide needed community services.

The Yonge/Eglinton area is being transformed into a super-dense subcenter of high-rise towers with few public amenities, too few community resources, and a too-restricted public realm. The Canada Square site, as a City-owned property, can potentially be used to provide some of the amenities that the private sector will not provide.

There are multiple public benefits that the City-owned Canada Square property could provide: (1) a significant public park visible from the Yonge/Eglinton intersection, (2) additional community facilities, from day-care to a cultural center, (3) a site for a much-needed school, (4) meeting places for community events, and (5) a potential venue for cultural events.

We applaud City Council’s efforts to increase amenities in the public realm in downtown Toronto. We urge Council to do the same in Yonge/Eglinton. If it is worth spending hundreds of millions of dollars to create a rail-deck park in downtown Toronto (which it is!), it is surely worth spending comparable dollars to create a similar if smaller amenity for the fast growing population in midtown Toronto.

Canada Square redevelopment must continue to provide significant employment opportunities

The Yonge/Eglinton area has had a large office component that is being replaced by more residential development. Given that the Canada Square property is on top of what is soon to become Toronto’s third-most important transit interchange, it should be a focus for providing jobs as well as condos. The site should be a mixed use hub rather than just a high density residential suburb – we should be aiming to create complete communities.

An employment center needs a critical mass to be successful. Current developer incentives are to provide housing, not employment. While City policies on this are a bigger issue than just the Canada Square property, allowing a developer to prioritize residential development over employment on this site would represent a significant step backwards from the current use of the site.

The Canada Square redevelopment must accommodate improvements to public transit.

The Yonge/Eglinton subway interchange is a disaster waiting to happen. Once development along the Eglinton LRT materializes, there is a real danger that the kind of dangerous overcrowding currently (pre-Covid) experienced at Yonge/Bloor will become replicated at Yonge/Eglinton. Pre Covid, the Yonge line was certainly overcrowded at rush hours.

If the City has any concern for what will happen subsequent to the next decade, it must ensure that development on the Canada Square site does not preclude the kind of investment that may be required to deal with future congestion on the Yonge/Eglinton subway platform. At a minimum, it should ensure that the underpinnings of proposed buildings do not rule out expansion of the subway platforms.

Beyond this, Toronto is famous for the kind of forward-looking engineering that built the Bloor Street viaduct over the Don in a form that was pre-engineered to allow for a below-deck subway fifty years later. While it is premature to assume what will be required post-2040 (the current end-date of MetroLinx planning), it would be only sensible to ensure that options for future transit improvements in the Yonge corridor are not precluded.

Looking to the more distant future, it could be possible to construct an express subway line from Yonge/Eglinton down to Bay/Bloor and from there down under Bay Street to the downtown, allowing residents of Yonge/Eglinton (and areas to the south) to be able to board the subway during rush hours (something already becoming increasingly difficult). Planning for the Canada Square property should ensure that potentially vital future transit improvements are not ruled out.

It is critical that the impacts of the terms of the 2018 City/Oxford Properties agreement does not interfere with the achievement of the critical planning goals for the site.

We are of course unaware of the terms of the agreement but are concerned that the terms could fetter the needed planning study and related decision-making about the Oxford application. We are concerned that the agreement with Oxford Properties was entered into before civic objectives for the site were fully evaluated and without any public input as to development objectives for the site. City Council is now to consider opening the agreement, which to date has been confidential. As well the planning context in Yonge/Eglinton has been dramatically changed by the pace of development, requiring an urgent renewed evaluation of the uses and community services that could be realized from the Canada Square property.

FoNTRA recommends:

- **that the relevant terms of the 2018 City/Oxford agreement be made public that could affect the appropriate and unfettered decision-making for the Canada Square site.**

Respectfully,

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Co-Chair, FoNTRA

Cathie Macdonald
Co-Chair, FoNTRA

cc: Tracey Cook, Deputy City Manager
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