



THE ANNEX RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Toronto, June 23 2026

Councilmeeting@toronto.ca

100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Chow and City Councillors

Re: 2026.IE30.8 - Queen's Park North Donation Concept Plan Update Report

After an 18-month voyage, the good ship SS “Big Moves” is within sight of land. Whether it makes port safely at the “green oasis” or is seduced by the siren's call of treasure and founders on the shoals is an open question.

The ship has a new captain and crew. But does it continue to sail guided by the same charts with which it left port?

There are some encouraging signs. The City's Executive Committee on March 10 (EX.29.3), the Design Review Panel on March 11, and the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on June 10 (IE.30.8) signalled that the proposed conceptual plan should be informed by three pillars:

- an Urban Forest Management Plan;
- a Cultural Heritage Statement of Significance;
- the character of Queen's Park North as the sole “green oasis” in the heart of a dense urban area.

It is confounding that “consultation” could have come that far without these elements against which to test the conceptual plan. The conceptual plan is proposed to be sent to the development of detailed design, a process to be guided by a Working Group, with reporting at 30% and 60% design development.

But there are troubling uncertainties:

- Despite the park donation being the largest in the City's history, reports to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee and to Council have not been filed in a timely manner, frustrating community input.
- And why is it necessary to engage lobbyists to tout the donation?
- To date, there are no public dimensional drawings for the 20-some proposed interventions. Just squiggles overlaid on a graphic of the Park.
- More granularly, the Park is currently 88% lawn. The conceptual plan as originally proposed would have reduced the lawn to 25%. The conceptual plan presented by Staff to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee would reduce the lawn to 41%. (Both of the latter percentages were calculated without the benefit of dimensional drawings.) Save for the deletion of a workshop and a kiosk, all the elements of the original "Big Moves" conceptual plan—plus a few—remain. This is not an exercise in quantifiable analysis, but rather a qualitative one about how much of the Park, if any, should be given over to interventions and activation to enhance visitors' experience, in a Park most people value as a place of respite.
- Equally troubling, but not alone, is the restaurant proposed in the Staff report, one without a business case, and how it would be operated. The clear direction at the Infrastructure and Environment Committee was that, if this element were to proceed, it would be a cafe, not a restaurant. And yet Staff contemplates a 2700 sq ft restaurant with a basement and indoor seating for 40.
- And would the operator be selected by the University of Toronto or by the City under competitive bidding? The answer at Infrastructure and Environment Committee was yes to both.

We could go on, but this dogged fealty to the interventions proposed in the conceptual plan raises a central question: **is the inclusion of the interventions a condition of the proposed donation?**

This has been asked repeatedly but without an answer. Perhaps the City Manager can answer the question.

If the donation is conditional, then we should stand down on the Working Group, end the charade of "consultation", and leave Council with a clear choice: either abandon an irreplaceable urban forest and accept the donation, or preserve it for present and future generations as the "Temple of Trees".

We submit that the latter is the only choice.

Sincerely,

Henry Wiercinski

Henry Wiercinski
Chair, Planning and Development Committee
The Annex Residents' Association