

To the City of Toronto Executive Committee:

I am writing to urge you to delay approval of the staff report about plans to redevelop Queen's Park North. It's not at all clear why the request for your approval is scheduled for Tuesday March 10 when the public survey asking for opinions on the Weston Foundation plan is still open until April 2, and it's even more puzzling why the staff report outlines the many objections to the current plan, including consistent calls "to go light" on the number of new amenities and to ensure that the park will remain a place of quiet refuge -- but then recommends that you sign off on the plan as is. It's even more alarming that your approval will include bypassing the standard tender procedure to examine proposals from construction companies, apparently leaving approval largely to people employed or paid for by the Weston Foundation. The need for continuing maintenance and security is mentioned in terms of payment from the Weston Foundation, but does not include clear intentions for community engagement.

As a resident of a nearby community who depends on Queen's Park as the only substantial green space in the area, I agree with the recommendations from our Councillor and representatives of local residents' associations (letters linked from the meeting webpage) that the rush for approval must be slowed down and made more transparent. First of all, the City mandate to protect the historic and natural heritage of the park requires completion of an expert study of how construction will affect the extensive root system of its historic trees. It also requires more attention to the points being made by community members objecting to the commercialization of what is now a quiet refuge from urban life. Although washroom facilities and perhaps some food services could enhance users' experiences, they should at least be placed along the south border with Wellesley Avenue.

I would also like to see more provision for ongoing community consultation about an important green space in the city. For that reason, I hope you will defer the Executive Committee decision until staff recommendations can be modified, and I also urge you to place the final decisions on the plan with the Council Committee on Environment and Infrastructure, which can help shape more nuanced responses to community input about plans for the park.

With respect,
Margaret Procter

