



Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Executive Committee
University of Toronto Students' Union
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executives@utsu.ca

RE: Item TE19.2 & TE19.11

Dear members of the Toronto & East York Community Council,

As the Executive Committee of the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU), representing over 38,000 full-time undergraduate students at the University of Toronto's St. George campus, we are writing to you today in regards to Items TE19.2 and TE19.11. Both relate to the proposed development and construction of the University of Toronto's Centre for Civilizations, Cultures and Cities (CCC), and the status and plans of surrounding buildings, including Falconer Hall and the Edward Johnson Building.

The UTSU has been in support of the CCC project throughout its planning, and underscores the dire need for student space at the St. George campus. However, we have a number of concerns about the proposed development at 78-90 Queen's Park, and long-term planning for the surrounding area, that have not been satisfactorily addressed thus far, and we would like to bring these to the attention of the Toronto & East York Community Council for consideration alongside Items TE19.2 and TE19.11.

The UTSU believes that there needs to be more space for students on campus: residences, classrooms, practice rooms, lounge spaces, and more. As U of T Vice-President Operations and Real Estate Partnerships, Scott Mabury, indicated at the July 14 public consultation, the University of Toronto is renting approximately 500,000 sq. ft. of off-campus space—space that is paid for by our members through their tuition fees. The proposed Centre for Civilizations, Cultures and Cities at 78-90 Queen's Park Crescent would be an important step in providing much needed space for U of T students. However, student space needs to work for students, and we worry that this proposal, and the University of Toronto's approach to developing this corner of campus, do not adequately meet the needs of students, particularly those in U of T's Faculty of Music.

Air quality, safety, and building accessibility issues during the construction of the CCC project are a serious concern, and conducting daily operations in such close proximity to a capital project comes with a predictable risk of possibly needing to relocate Faculty of Music students to another facility. Academic operations at the Faculty of Music, due to their nature, can only be conducted in a music-specific facility, and any sudden need for relocation would impede on the day-to-day activities of the Faculty. Additionally, as cited in the University of Toronto's project report, accessibility accommodations will need to be made for entry into the building, as the east side of the Edward Johnson Building is the only accessible entrance available. There are currently no clear plans in place for implementing these



accommodations, and we are concerned that the approval of this project without first addressing these needs would pose a significant barrier to students. .

In addition to these construction-related concerns, the Edward Johnson Building (EJB), a nearly 60-year-old building, is in serious need of renovation. As U of T's project report rightly points out, both Walter Hall and MacMillan Theatre are in desperate need of renovations for both acoustics and accessibility. While the addition of a recital hall in the 78-90 Queen's Park project would supposedly help alleviate this, we are also worried about the current plans to include a large, flat glass window inside the hall, which as the U of T project report points out would be incredibly difficult to insulate for both acoustics and outside noise. The UTSU is concerned that, especially without the inclusion of any additional practice and rehearsal space for music students, plans surrounding this recital hall would only delay much-needed renovations to the existing EJB facility. Item TE19.11, if approved, would begin the process of including the Edward Johnson Building on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. While the UTSU is generally in support of designating the EJB as a heritage site, and believes that its performance facilities should be mostly preserved, serious concerns cannot be ignored that such a designation could inhibit a better future for the space in which music students learn.

To address these concerns, we are asking that the Toronto & East York Community Council delay approval of this project, and delay the initiation of the heritage designation process for the Edward Johnson Building. We also ask that the University of Toronto propose a plan that would address the outlined concerns, and establish a long-term plan for the future of the Faculty of Music, in consultation with students.

The UTSU would like to reaffirm our support for this project overall; it would provide much-needed space for students to learn and grow at U of T. However, we do not believe that the current long-term planning surrounding the 78-90 Queen's Park site and the adjacent Edward Johnson Building adequately reflect the needs of our members. We hope that these concerns can be addressed in a future proposal, and that U of T students will be better served because of it.

Yours,

The UTSU Executive | executives@utsu.ca | 416-978-4911

CC:

Mike Layton, City Councillor, Ward 11

Scott Mabury, Vice-President Operations & Real Estate Partnerships, U of T

Christine Burke, Director, Campus & Facilities Planning, U of T

Faculty of Music Undergraduate Association