

Briefing Memo

To Downtown Yonge Members

From James L. Robinson, Executive Director

Date January 6, 2011

• • • • • **Re** Update on Fire at 335 Yonge Street



Dear Members,

This is an update on the situation associated with the fire at 335 Yonge Street, a look to what is happening in the days ahead, and Downtown Yonge's requests from the City to move forward.

SITUATION UPDATE

Businesses in the vicinity of the site continue to be closed on the west side of Yonge Street; these are the retailers located between Edward Street to Elm Street. On the east side of Yonge Street, HMV at 333 Yonge St remains closed.

Pedestrian traffic is restricted on Yonge Street between Edward Street and Elm Street. Further, vehicular traffic is restricted from the larger area of Yonge Street from Dundas Street to Gerrard Street.

While Edward Street and Elm Street are open to vehicles, access is restricted at the Yonge Street intersections. Vehicular access to Edward Street and Elm Street is currently limited to the Bay Street intersections.

Demolition has started on what remains of the facades of the historic property. It has been established that the remaining brickwork of the building is so badly damaged that the facades cannot be retained. The facade on Gould Street is currently being carefully demolished. Demolition is moving from east to west on the site. Water is being lightly sprayed onto the site to keep dust contained as the demolition proceeds. The Yonge Street facade demolition will follow after.

We continue to express our appreciation to the Toronto Fire Services for their work in containing the blaze. We are fortunate that the fire did not spread to adjacent properties. More details are now being reported in the media of the heroic work of the firefighters. We extend our sincere thanks and offer wishes of a speedy recovery to those who were injured in the line of duty.

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THE DAYS AHEAD

It is our understanding that once demolition is completed and the site deemed to be safe, investigation of the site into the cause will commence. This will include searching for human remains, an unfortunate possibility given that the building may have been occupied by a homeless person(s) seeking shelter. Further, the cause of the blaze is also to be thoroughly investigated.

It is currently difficult to know exactly when the street will be reopened and the neighbouring businesses allowed to reopen. City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam has been providing Downtown Yonge with regular updates from Toronto Fire Services. There has been discussion that the street may reopen by the weekend or possibly early next week. It is difficult to speculate on a date given that the work is still ongoing. This is most definitively a trying time for the businesses that are closed and the others who are impacted by the redirection of pedestrians and vehicles.

DOWNTOWN YONGE POSITION

As the B.I.A. for the district, we have long been concerned with the condition of 335 Yonge Street and many other properties.

For nine years, we have been advocating for investment and restoration of 335 Yonge Street. The partial collapse of the property in April 2010 and no visible action since has resulted in tremendous frustration within the community. Businesses were closed for days following the collapse and to this day the hoarding continues to restrict pedestrian, vehicle, and delivery traffic in the area.

The blaze this week brought further attention to this property. Hundreds of media stories have again been generated. Retailers in the vicinity of the site are again prevented from re-opening. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic is once again restricted. This is terrible for business.

It is with great sadness that Toronto has lost this historic property. While other historic properties in the district are finding new uses and relevance for today's society, there continues to be heritage and non-heritage properties that are neglected. This is not the image we want to portray of Toronto's main street.

Yonge Street is also a new frontier for development. There is tremendous development pressure emerging on Yonge Street. If executed well, new investment will further support the vibrant urban experience that is Downtown Yonge. If planned poorly, Toronto could be like the centres of other cities that have demolished the human-scaled properties that makes downtown the place for people.

Downtown Yonge has taken the position of requesting that the City of Toronto work with our organization to ensure that:

-Upon demolition, immediately move back the hoarding such that the sidewalks and road operations on Yonge Street and Gould Street are fully restored.

-Identify an interim use to activate the site while a new future is being planned for the property. Considerations may include a public parkette, quality food service amenities, and other uses that animate the site in the interim for the Spring 2011 visitors' season.

-Examine other derelict properties on Yonge Street and identify what is required to ensure their protection.

-Establish an approach to development that recognizes that the remaining historic properties on Yonge Street are an integral part of Toronto's identity. This includes retention of the 3 to 4 storey street wall and the stepping-back of new development to maintain the human-scale experience of Toronto's main street.

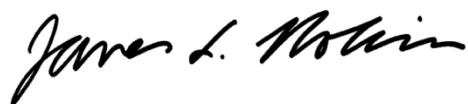
These requests have been put forward to City Councillor Kristyn-Wong Tam who indicated that she is prepared to work with Downtown Yonge and the community in championing these issues in the short and long terms.

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

Please continue to provide us with your feedback on what you are experiencing as a result of the situation at 335 Yonge Street. We need your support in applying pressure to ensure that the site doesn't sit empty for years. And, in the long term, let's ensure that development and investment happens on Yonge Street that have vibrant historic properties are at the core.

Sincerely,

Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area



James L. Robinson

Executive Director