



230 FIGHTBACK

230 FIGHTBACK MEETS WITH SENIOR CITY OF TORONTO OFFICIALS

In challenging KingSett Capital's plans to build a luxury condo at 214-230 Sherbourne in the Downtown East and demanding that social housing be created on the site, 230 Fightback has focused on mobilizing the community to confront the developer and the political decision makers.

There are, however, City of Toronto agencies that play an important role in housing provision and in developing the official plans that regulate this process. For that reason, we had demanded meetings with Create TO and the Housing Secretariat and had to use vigorous forms of public action to secure these meetings.

On April 7, a five-person delegation of 230 Fightback members held a meeting in a City Hall boardroom with eight senior municipal officials who play a major role in housing matters. We recognized that, while these people aren't the politicians who make decisions, they are influential players whose recommendations are of major importance.

That being so, our delegation stressed the critical importance of Dundas and Sherbourne, in the very heart of a poor working-class community. We highlighted the long community-based struggle to win social housing at that site and how destructive a luxury development there would be. We also hammered home the point that this site has stood vacant for almost two decades, in a community with the most serious and pressing housing needs. We suggested that the recommendations and proposals these officials put together should reflect the critical place that this site has in any effort to create housing that meets the needs of the community.

The officials accepted that this particular location was of exceptional importance. They pointed out that KingSett doesn't show any signs of being prepared to sell the property at a viable price but they are ready to discuss this with them at any point. They accepted that securing this property would be very important and that luxury housing there would be very negative. They agreed that having this lot stand empty was harmful to the community.

The City is working on two major reports that relate to the Downtown East and its housing needs and we were informed that the historical background we had provided and the particular issue of 214-230 Sherbourne would be part of this.

The meeting wasn't a decisive step and we had no illusions it would be. However, the struggle we have taken up and the criminal neglect of a community that it speaks to are now very much part of the agenda. The senior planners are aware of this issue and must relate to it in their deliberations.

Beyond that, we have no expectations of winning this fight courtesy of enlightened municipal officials. It will take powerful and sustained community action to break the power of the developer and the subservience of the political decision makers to that power. The struggle for social housing in the Downtown East continues.