

**University of Toronto Schools supporters vow to fight eviction notice –**

**Alumni and parents want U of T to reconsider plan to have elite high school vacate campus site.**

**By ANNA MEHLER PAPERNY**

Dozens of the University of Toronto Schools alumni, parents and students are taking matters into their own hands, urging U of T to reconsider its decision to tell the elite high school it has a decade to find a new location.

Since it was established in 1910 as a kind of laboratory for U of T's faculty of education and a testing ground for student teachers, the University of Toronto Schools has called 371 Bloor St. W. home. The university, which owns the property, told the high school's board last month that its \$48-million refurbishment proposal had been rejected and that it must relocate by 2021.

The university is not yet sure what it wants to do with the site and does not have funds for redevelopment.

In the meantime, a movement is percolating to get the university to reverse its decision.

"The UTS is more than a real-estate agreement and it's more than an administrative division of OISE. It's a living, breathing institution with a century-long association with U of T," said John Duffy, the Liberal strategist and UTS alumnus spearheading the initiative. "The real-estate decision puts the future of the school and its affiliation with the university somewhat into play."

Ideally, the group would like the university to cancel its decision. But at the very least, he said, it wants a do-over of the decision-making process.

"We don't think the process by which the decision was made is one that was accountable and open and transparent in the way that you'd associate with a big decision like that," Mr. Duffy said.

In accordance with a five-year-old agreement, the high school submitted a redevelopment proposal in December, but U of T decided it wasn't in the university's best interest. U of T vice-president of business affairs Cathy Riggall has noted that UTS has been independent since 2006 and the decision doesn't change its programming or academic affiliations.

"The university followed the process laid out in the affiliation agreement," Ms. Riggall said Wednesday. "There is no reason to start the process again."

It's early days yet for UTS supporters - Mr. Duffy still doesn't know what form their lobbying will take or what precisely their game plan is.

The UTS board is urging concerned alumni to "let the board and building committee determine whether, when and where pressure needs to be applied."

"We believe the UTS community can play an important role in ensuring that the university delivers on its stated commitment to assist UTS in its relocation, rather than apply pressure aimed at changing the decision to not implement the site redevelopment proposal," the board said in an email to alumni.

David Rounthwaite, chair of the high school's building committee, said he doesn't think attempts to reverse the university's decision will hurt negotiations with U of T over financial assistance when it comes to buying, building and moving into a new location. Those talks have yet to begin, although he expects to sit down with the university administration in the coming weeks.

"I think all this activity will focus everybody's attention on what is the proper way forward for the school and how to secure the best terms for it."