

## *Save the O'Connor House Committee*

The Save the O'Connor House Committee was formed in June 2003 with a view to putting together a plan on behalf of the community to save the O'Connor Estate. At their meeting in April 2003 the Toronto District Catholic School Board had decided not to include the Estate in their plans for the new O'Connor school, but nevertheless gave the community one year to come up with a plan to save the Estate. The Board did not see itself being able to find the funds to save the Estate, but the Board said that it would be open to the presentation of a plan.

In subsequent months there was much informal talk about the possibility of forming an ad hoc committee. The 40th Anniversary of Senator O'Connor College School was celebrated in May 2004, and this was a significant springboard in the eventual formation of the Committee. The Committee was formed with representatives from School Administration, Teaching Staff, Alumni, Neighbourhood, Parents, the Architect of the new school and former teachers. The local Trustee Angela Kennedy was an active advocate at various key points.

The Save the O'Connor House Committee presented a plan to the Board at their meeting of April 2004. Collin McDonald spoke on behalf of the Committee, presenting several hundred signatures in support of the preservation of the Estate. The Committee committed to preparing a Request for Proposal to find a suitable party who would lease the Estate from the Board. At their meeting in October 2004 the Board decided to postpone indefinitely seeking a permit from the City to demolish the Estate. The Request for Proposal was finally published in late November 2004. Two parties expressed interest in the RFP, but then declined. However after the final date for submission an initiative from a minority view in one of those parties began to be entertained, and this initiative grew into the "O'Connor Irish Heritage House" proposal!

(Thomas O'Brien and Leslie Hennessey – co-Chairs of the Save the O'Connor House Committee)