

Dennis Mills' next project: Bringing the UN to Toronto

MP wants agency to move headquarters from New York City

NATIONAL POST AUGUST 7, 2003

Bill Curry

CanWest News Service

Thursday, August 07, 2003

OTTAWA - MP Dennis Mills, the man who brought Mick Jagger to Toronto this summer and the Pope to the city last year, has another big idea. He wants the United Nations to move to the Toronto waterfront.

Toronto's unique multicultural nature, coupled with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's insistence on sticking with the UN throughout the war in Iraq, would make Canada's largest city a perfect place to breathe new life into the much-maligned international body, argues Mr. Mills, MP for the riding of Toronto-Danforth.

"I want to do one last thing before I retire," he told CanWest News yesterday in explaining why he plans to run for a fifth and final term as a federal MP. "I have one last burning issue in my heart and in my mind. I want to bring the United Nations to the eastern port lands in my riding."

Mr. Mills has long called for the roughly 160 hectares of undeveloped waterfront property to be used for a more creative purpose than a proposed series of high-rise condominiums, specifically, converting the land into a park.

The urban playground idea is still a priority, said Mr. Mills, but he wants a quarter of the land to be offered for a new UN headquarters. A \$25-million monorail could be built by Bombardier to link the facilities with Toronto's downtown core, he said.

The UN headquarters is one of New York's prime tourist attractions, but the UN's top manager has said the buildings are a safety hazard in need of billions of dollars in repairs. The UN has approached the United States for a \$1.3-billion loan to cover some of the costs.

But Gordon Smith, the director of the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria, said there is no appetite at the UN to leave New York.

"I'd put that up there with the Turks and Caicos islands becoming part of Canada. I just don't think the UN is going anywhere. I think [Mr. Mills] is whistling in the dark."

bcurry@cns.canwest.com

