

## OMB VICTORY FOR JOBS AND COMMUNITY

In a stunning and long-awaited ruling, the Ontario Municipal Board last week rejected a developer's plan to build big-box shopping plaza in Leslieville.

The decision said the Smart!Centres project had some 'attributes,' but accepted that allowing one big box project would spread retail 'contagion' and undermine the city's intended goal of attracting strategic job-creating industries to its designated employment lands.

"We're thrilled. We also know there probably will be appeals, but at this moment we're pretty excited," said Kelly Carmichael, chair of the East Toronto Community Coalition, which ran a sophisticated campaign against the development. The ETCC was supported by the Good Jobs Alliance made up of local workplace unions from film, manufacturing, service and South-Central postal facilities.

The land at 629 Eastern Avenue originally housed the Toronto Ironworks foundry. When the foundry closed, it became Toronto Film Studios, which became a favourite of many directors, including David Cronenberg.. But after it moved to the new Filmport location Smart!Centres announced plans to build a 700,000 square-foot retail complex at the site with parking for 2,000 cars. Smart!Centres normally brings in Wal-Mart as its anchor tenant. The neighbourhood rose up in protest, warning of heavy traffic as cars flooded into the area to shop, and protesting the minimum-wage, part-time jobs that the big-box centre would bring.

Councillor Paula Fletcher (Toronto Danforth), who represents the ward, said the decision will help preserve a vibrant future of the neighbourhood.

'I was pretty excited, but just extremely happy, just for the long-term employment lands, because I think they've been under incursion and attack for a long time in the city,' she said. 'There's a lot of pressure, whenever there's a plot of land that you can put something on. So these are lands that are set aside for job-related function and the fact that the OMB upheld that I think is exciting for everybody in Toronto.'