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October 15, 2012

SENT VIA EMAIL AND REGULAR POST

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Hon. Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure
Ferguson Block, 3rd Floor
77 Wellesley St. West
Toronto ON M7A1Z8

RE: 11 Wellesley West/ East of Bay Lands Letter dated September 11, 2012

Dear Minister Chiarelli:

Thank you for your letter dated September 11th, 2012 in response to my letter to Premier McGuinty, dated August 7th, 2012.

I would like to bring to your attention the numerous actions taken by the City of Toronto and various stakeholders in the expression of interest in acquiring the 11 Wellesley St. West property for parkland purposes.

On March 20th, I received an email from Brian Athey, Director of Development at Morguard informing my office that control of the property was passed on to the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation and indicating they believed site testing and inspection activities were taking place on site. At that time, it was acknowledged by Morguard that Infrastructure Ontario was aware that both myself and the local MPP, Minister Glen Murray, had interest in the land.

On April 25th, members of two neighbourhood associations, the Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association and the Bay Cloverhill Community Association, wrote letters to your office regarding 11 Wellesley. Following this, myself and Minister Murray held five joint community planning meetings in April and May of 2012 to identify priorities for our 13 shared communities in Ward 27. One clear community priority that emerged out of these meetings was that the parkland allocation in Ward 27 was inadequate and the residents living in the south district again identified the 11 Wellesley Street West property and requested its conversion to parkland. The May 7th community meeting was covered by local newspaper, Xtra!:

http://www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/WongTam_wants_residents_to_occupy_Wellesley_Park-11958.aspx

It is my understanding that on May 27th, Minister Murray wrote a letter to your office regarding 11 Wellesley and the interest from the community in having the property become parkland as a result of overwhelming support for this initiative at the joint planning meetings referenced above. In his letter, Minister Murray referred to working closely with myself and MP Bob Rae to advance this priority on behalf of the riding and ward.

With reference to your comment that the City did not "raise any concerns" when consulted on the environmental assessment, it is my understanding that the scope of questions asked of them was very limited and the timeline so short that Planning staff did not have an opportunity to fully review the file.

On June 1st, my office received an email from a constituent on Bay Street indicating bulldozers were on site at 11 Wellesley, inquiring what activity was taking place on site. My office then contacted Minister Murray for an update on site activity. Subsequently, on June 15th, I received an email from the CBRE requesting a meeting to discuss the sale of 11 Wellesley, stating their plan to launch the sale a week from June 15th, 2012. I met with Hersh Tencer, Director of Sales and Acquisitions- Infrastructure Ontario, Adam Carr, Manager, Sales and Acquisitions- Infrastructure Ontario, and David Black, Senior Policy Advisor- Ministry of Infrastructure on June 19th.

At the above-noted meeting, I requested that the property not be listed at that time, and asked that the city be given an opportunity of 2-3 months to devise a proposal to create a new park on the site. I advised Infrastructure Ontario staff that if the province were to create a long-term lease for 11 Wellesley to the City of Toronto, then I would have the funds to design and construct the park. I advised Infrastructure Ontario staff that the city could not compete in a bidding war against condominium developers and expressed disappointment that our joint efforts as elected officials at the municipal and provincial levels to advocate for our community were being ignored. My request for the time delay of 2-3 months was not agreed to nor was my proposal for a land lease at the time of this meeting. Infrastructure Ontario staff advised that they would speak to you about my requests and respond shortly. To date we have not heard back from them.

The property was listed for sale shortly afterwards, and at City Council in July (11th-13th) I successfully moved the following motion directing City staff to enter into exploratory discussions with Infrastructure Ontario regarding 11 Wellesley:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.MM25.7>.

Further to the motion, I also wrote two letters to Premier McGuinty including the letter to which we received your response on September 11th, reiterating the importance of the Province working with the City to realize the local community's vision and wishes for a new urban park.

On August 15th, Toronto City Manager, Joe Pennachetti, wrote to Premier McGuinty about the City's interest in the property and it was my understanding that discussions would continue between our levels of government to explore how the property could be acquired for the community's interests. In his letter, the City Manager expressly states that the property is of "strategic interest to the City of Toronto", and further cites the "substantial efforts" of myself and my constituents, through securing Council direction, to ensure City staff pursue exploratory discussions.

I requested a meeting with the Premier on September 18th, to which I received no acknowledgement or response.

It is disappointing to learn that the Province continues to take no action to respect the wishes of the residents of our neighbourhood. As the local elected representative, it is my responsibility to ensure the needs and priorities of my constituents are met, and to date, your government has received a petition with over two thousand three hundred signatures, six hundred resident letters and communications as well as ongoing notification of their continued interest, and that of the City.

Clearly the Toronto Centre-Rosedale community has spoken. City Manager Joe Pennachetti has reached out to the Province and has received no response. As noted, I have made many attempts to discuss this with Premier McGuinty. The community has rallied to this cause and has been met with a wall of silence from the Province, from yourself and the Premier. The City of Toronto, my office and the residents of this neighbourhood are ready and willing to work together. I remain hopeful that your government will work with my office and the community to create this park. All we need is a Provincial partner willing to engage with us on any meaningful level.

Respectfully yours,



Kristyn Wong-Tam
City Councillor, Ward 27
Toronto Centre-Rosedale

KWT/ac

c.c.: Premier Dalton McGuinty
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing
Hon. Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance
Hon. Glen Murray
Joe Pennachetti, City Manager, City of Toronto