



**The Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre:
"A community where people rebuild their lives."**

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Registered Charity: 129678231RR0001

February 22, 2021

Dear Toronto and East York Community Councillors,

Re: TE23.26 - 1521 Queen Street West - Zoning By-law Amendment Application - Request for Direction

On behalf of PARC (the Parkdale Activity -Recreation Centre), a community mental health organization that has been providing services to individuals with mental health and/or substance use histories living in Parkdale since 1980, I am writing to support the Request for Directions Report calling on Toronto and East York Community Council to oppose BSäR's rezoning application for 1521 Queen St W at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). However, I am requesting that TEYCC amend this report to include the following recommendations from the Justice for Queen's Hotel Coalition:

1. **Deny the application unless it proposes to replace the 27 affordable dwelling rooms from which tenants were violently and unlawfully evicted by BSäR in 2015.** The replacement of affordable dwelling rooms and units must be equivalent to the residential gross floor area (GFA) of the dwelling rooms and units which were present at the time of the unlawful evictions in 2015, and must be provided to the impacted tenants, or tenants in similar need, at a deeply affordable rate for 99 years.
2. **Seek a legal agreement, specifically a Community Benefits Agreement, that includes:**
 - a. A robust replacement plan for the 27 de-tenanted units, and
 - b. Mechanisms for community oversight through key community stakeholders.
3. **Name all the 'documented offences' under the Residential Tenancies Act that took place at this site**, including BSäR pleading guilty to 4 counts of "unlawfully recovering possession of a rental unit", with a total fine of \$14,000.
4. **Formally condemn BSäR Group of Companies for their disregard of tenant rights and the threat they pose to the community at large.** This can be achieved by calling for full compensation for impacted tenants from the unlawful evictions in 2015 by providing for immediate and guaranteed stable housing.

Background Context

BSäR Group of Companies is proposing a rezoning application for a proposed development at 1521 Queen St. West, the site of the former Queen's Hotel where the developer is responsible for the unlawful and violent eviction of 27 tenants in 2015. In a move that will effectively minimize community involvement in the planning process, BSäR Group of Companies has now filed for an appeal to the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (LPAT).

But members of the Parkdale community, led by the Justice for Queen's Hotel Coalition (J4QH), are making their voices heard by calling on the Toronto and East York Community Council to demand that any development on the site must include replacement units at similar rents for the 27 units lost and a right of return option for the displaced tenants or tenants in similar need through a [Community Benefits Agreement](#).

Community Benefits Agreements are emerging as a new best practice in planning, evidenced by the [city's CBA commitment](#) undergirding public infrastructure projects. The Coalition sees this not only as an opportunity for BSaR to set a precedent in responsive, community-driven development, but as a necessary form of justice to those who were [coercively removed from their homes](#) six years ago.

Parkdale and other communities are insisting on equitable forms of development in their neighbourhoods that benefit existing residents by prioritizing the needs of community members at risk of displacement. They are saying no to predatory developers like the BSaR Group of Companies and no to the accumulation of wealth through the displacement and dispossession of vulnerable and existing community members.

At the upcoming TEYCC meeting, you will review two developments facing similar histories to the former Queen's Hotel. In nearby Ward 10, another neighbourhood group is contesting Intentional Capital's development application on the site of the Palace Arms, a 90 unit rooming house, calling for full replacement of all 90 units. The current plan calls for only 31 units of affordable housing at rents well above what the displaced tenants would be able to afford. Around the corner, a demolition application is being proposed at 127 Strachan Ave in a historic building that is believed to house residential units.

On the surface it would seem easy for [multi-million dollar developers](#) to find a way to subsidize the replacement of units. For instance, if BSaR's existing proposal's inadequate 3 car spaces were expanded to the city's required 53, and these were rented for the typical \$200/month, that already provides over a third of the \$27 000 in rent from the units in line with the [city's affordable rental housing guidelines](#). BSaR's [other properties](#) are renting at the lowest [1850 a month](#), almost double the affordability level.

The LPAT has been criticized for not only replicating the developer-friendly model of the previous Ontario Municipal Board, but also for literally being [run by ex-developer lobbyists](#). It removes community involvement in the planning process even further by limiting participation to party status, denying appeals on the basis of inclusionary zoning, and restricting community presentation of evidence through procedure and cost.

Based on this context, we are calling on Toronto and East York Community Council to take a stand against predatory developers and demonstrate that "good planning policy" can only be achieved when we prioritize community voices in achieving community wellbeing and shared wealth.

Thank you for your consideration,

Victor Willis

Executive Director
PARC 9Parkdale Activity – Recreation Centre)
Cc – Councillor Gord Perks,
Councillor Paula Fletcher
