



OLIVIA CHOW MAYOR

March 22, 2024

Dear Executive Committee,

RE: Supporting potential city-building opportunities on Toronto District School Board lands

As stewards of over 5,000 acres of land throughout the city, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has unique opportunities to advance city-building initiatives on its lands that are deemed surplus, which could bring significant benefits to students and local communities as the city grows.

A recent example is the Davisville Community and Aquatic Centre, a new City-led aquatic and multi-use community centre on the site of the Davisville Junior Public School and Spectrum Alternative School. There will be shared facilities so the school will have access to the swimming pools, and the City will have access to the school's gymnasium and underground parking outside of school hours to support City recreation programming.

To help facilitate future opportunities, TDSB has requested the Ministry of Education to amend provincial regulations to enable them leverage broader city-building benefits on its surplus lands.

Currently, under provincial rules, if a piece of property owned by the school board is deemed surplus, the school board is required to obtain fair market value for the public asset.

The TDSB has recommended that school boards be able to request an exemption from the Minister of Education on the requirement to obtain fair market value for the lands, where there are opportunities to enhance education and learning opportunities for students, or if the proposed use would advance a provincial priority, such as long-term care uses, strategic housing opportunities, or Truth, Justice and Reconciliation.

While fair market value would be sought in most circumstances, this proposed change would help achieve some of the City and Province's broader goals on publicly-owned lands. City Council, as part of 2022.CC2.1 "2023 Housing Action Plan", has directed staff to engage with school boards to encourage the creation of housing on their lands.



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Additionally, through 2022.MM45.6, in support of a 'For Indigenous, By Indigenous' affordable housing project, City Council requested the Province of Ontario and/or the Minister of Education and Training to exempt from the requirements of Ontario Regulation 444/98, Disposition of Surplus Property, TDSB-identified surplus sites that can be conveyed to Indigenous housing developers at lower than market or nominal cost for the purpose of building permanently affordable rental housing for Indigenous communities; and requested that the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Land Corporation consider conveying a narrow strip of greenspace neighbouring the project to Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes Inc. at lower than market value or nominal cost for the purpose of building more permanently affordable rental housing for Indigenous communities as part of the project.

This letter proposes to endorse the TDSB's request, and to forward this endorsement to the provincial Minister of Education.

RECOMMENDATION

1. City Council express its support to the Minister of Education of the Toronto District School Board request that an amendment be made to O. Reg. 444/98, Disposition of Surplus Property, to enable school boards to request a Ministerial exemption from the requirement to obtain fair market value for school board lands where a direct benefit is being secured that enhances the education and learning opportunities for students or advances a provincial priority (e.g., housing, long-term care, Truth and Reconciliation).
2. City Council request the Toronto District School Board work with the City of Toronto to identify sites suitable for the development of new affordable housing.

Yours truly,

Olivia Chow
Mayor of Toronto