



April 7, 2024

Attention: Toronto City Council

RE: Supporting a Barrier-Free Long-Term Land Lease with the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation for City-Owned Land

Dear Mayor Chow and Councillors,

We are writing in support of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation (SCCR)'s request for a long-term land lease with the City of Toronto. The project led by SCCR will build an important place of belonging for the Somali community, one of Canada's largest Black communities. It is planned as an important public space that will be a focal point for Somali creativity, community work, recreation, and for archiving Somali culture and heritage in Canada.

The Black Muslim Initiative is a Toronto-based non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues at the intersection of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia through advocacy, research and resource mobilization. Since 2018, we have published 4 seminal papers, held more than 30 plus events/townhalls and have been consulted by various institutions at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Our work continues to bring together various communities and provide solutions to complex intersectional challenges.

The City of Toronto has a historic opportunity to respond to over 40 years of community work to realize the SCCR social infrastructure project, fulfill a local need to animate public spaces, deliver on vital amenities such as the proposed cultural spaces, childcare, gymnasium, aquatic facility, and public realm improvements. In addition, the SCCR's project will bring important services to the community and key anchor partners that have the potential to provide high-quality educational, vocational, recreational, health services and cultural programming. This important project by the SCCR will serve as a catalyst for long overdue federal and provincial investments in social infrastructure for our diverse Black communities.

We urge you to immediately and unanimously adopt a positive decision that advances a long-term land lease for the SCCR and to clearly demonstrate the city's unwavering commitment to barrier-free investments in Black-led social infrastructure projects.

Sincerely,
Kofi K. Achampong
Member, Board of Directors, Black Muslim Initiative