

**April 8, 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.

**About CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals:**

The CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals is a charity dedicated to addressing economic and social barriers affecting black youth ages 14 and over in the GTA. For over a decade, we have provided workforce development, education, and advocacy programs. With over 1000 youth graduating since our inception, our partnerships, curriculum standardization, and support have been vital in achieving our mission.

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,



Agapi Gessesse  
Executive Director  
CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals