



June 17, 2024

Mayor Olivia Chow and the  
Members of the Executive Committee  
City of Toronto  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of the Executive Committee:

**RE: Proposed Land Lease for the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation – EX15.6**

We write to you on behalf of Buttonwood Hill Residents Association (BHRA) and the concerned residents in the Buttonwood Park community regarding the above-noted matter.

Our community is upset and disappointed to learn about the proposal to lease three acres of Buttonwood Park, without any public consultation whatsoever. In fact, we only became aware of this proposal on June 12<sup>th</sup>, when we were advised that it was scheduled to be considered at the Executive Committee meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

We understand that discussions about this proposal have been ongoing since 2022, and more recently, in April, 2024, we are advised that Buttonwood Park was chosen as the preferred location for the proposed centre and yet, the residents and taxpayers, who actually live in the Buttonwood community were not consulted at all and were only given 6 days' notice to respond.

We do not understand how or why our concerns or input was not considered. We pride ourselves on the democratic process that we believe in and yet, it appears that closed door confidential meetings that affect our community were happening without any notice, which is alarming and unacceptable.

Since becoming aware of this proposal, we have received hundreds of emails and letters, some of which you may have seen and received as well. A petition has been circulated in our community and within just two days, has garnered over 1900 signatures. This tells you how strongly our community feels about this matter.

The list of our concerns is lengthy, but we would like to highlight a few key points from our petition:

1. **Preservation of Green Space:** The parkland in question serves as a crucial green space for all residents in our community and the surrounding areas. Preserving this area is vital for the well-being of everyone, providing recreational opportunities, places for relaxation, and an important natural habitat for local wildlife.
2. **Community Impact:** The neighbourhood is growing significantly with approximately 1,300 condo units currently under construction and a new elementary school scheduled to begin construction this summer, and more pending development to come in the neighbouring Richview neighbourhood. In addition, we are deeply concerned about the increase in traffic and safety, not only for the young children that will be attending the new school to be built next to the park, but also to the residents of Chartwell Retirement Residence. These are all adjacent to, or within walking distance of Buttonwood Park.

Parkland is a shared resource that benefits a wide range of residents. Its conversion into a development site will reduce the available recreational area, adversely affecting the quality of life for the broader community who enjoy the park for various activities.

3. **Environmental Concerns:** The construction of a large facility on the parkland will likely have significant environmental impacts, including disruption of eco-systems, increased traffic, and potential pollution. Maintaining our green spaces helps combat urban heat islands and supports biodiversity.
4. **Alternative Locations:** We strongly urge the City Council to consider alternative locations for the proposed community centre that do not involve the loss of precious parkland. There are other areas within Toronto that may be more suitable for development without compromising public green spaces.
5. **Public Consultation:** The community requests that this matter NOT proceed without proper and fair public consultation on this issue. We request that the Executive Committee and Toronto City Council engage in thorough discussions with the community to explore alternative solutions that benefit everyone.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the Executive Committee and Toronto City Council reconsider the proposal to lease three acres of Buttonwood Park for the construction of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation and that it seek an alternative location that meets the needs of the SCCR, while preserving our valuable green space and parkland.

We also request that all communities be kept informed and consulted in an open and transparent manner when major changes such as this are being proposed in their neighbourhoods.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Kind regards,  
Christina Manulak  
Buttonwood Hill Residents Association