

June 16, 2024

Toronto Council – Executive Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2



Attention: Members of the Executive Committee:
Mayor Olivia Chow (Chair) mayor_chow@toronto.ca
Councillor Ausma Malik (Vice Chair) Councillor_Malik@toronto.ca
Councillor Paul Ainslie councillor_ainslie@toronto.ca
Councillor Alejandra Bravo Councillor_Bravo@toronto.ca
Councillor Shelley Carroll councillor_carroll@toronto.ca
Councillor Mike Colle councillor_colle8@toronto.ca
Councillor Paula Fletcher councillor_fletcher@toronto.ca
Councillor Josh Matlow councillor_matlow@toronto.ca
Councillor Jennifer McKelvie councillor_mckelvie@toronto.ca
Councillor Amber Morley Councillor_Morley@toronto.ca
Councillor Gord Perks councillor_perks@toronto.ca

RE: EX15.6 - Proposed Land Lease for the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation, Ward: 2 - Etobicoke Centre

Dear Members of the City of Toronto – Executive Council,

Friends of Silver Creek School began as a working group of Richmond Gardens' residents advocating on behalf of the Silver Creek Pre-School (SCPS) and The Etobicoke Children's Centre with the focus to preserve the vital programs operating out of Silver Creek School as part of a vibrant community hub including the adjacent green space linked to Silver Creek Park.

After approximately 2 long years of advocacy to ensure a positive outcome, the long-awaited decision was confirmed that the school and the attached green space was saved ensuring that programs and services which serve children with physical, developmental and mental health needs and autism would and still today, continue to operate and remain on-site in our community providing services to children from all over the Greater Toronto Area.

Today, Friends of Silver Creek are a committed group of volunteers who advocate for green space including the preservation of parkland and social community benefit. We work continue to inform, update and advocate on issues that impact our community, while striving to provide updates and notifications of events and activities focused on like-minded causes that impact communities across Toronto.

The positive outcome of our earlier advocacy was a result of many hours and work done together with both school program executive and their board of directors, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the former MPP for Etobicoke Centre, other members of the previous Provincial government, the Buttonwood Hill Residents Association and countless parents, residents and community members.

But this week we learned at the 11th hour about the years long plan by Toronto Council and Create TO to lease 3 acres of parkland at Buttonwood Public Park for development – without consultation, communication and any kind of involvement from Toronto Council and CreateTO to residents across the city and those specifically in Etobicoke Centre.

In the same communication, it was relayed that you, the Executive Committee on June 18th would have this agenda item voted on to confirm and move forward so that the proposed project could be executed.

Etobicoke Centre struggles to receive information at the best of times in a timely and informative manner but to have a project that was started in 2022 moved forward quietly and then to have most of Toronto Council vote to keep information confidential until final votes to approve the project confirmed are both disturbing and disappointing.

In April 2024, Toronto Council refused to allow information to be shared with the public and specifically Ward 2 residents and that the CEO, CreateTO had the ability to decide when the lease of parkland would be made public.

This entire project has lacked process to engage the community at large and transparency.

Why has this project been kept quite and been deemed confidential?

The issue Friends of Silver Creek is bringing forward is with the lease and development of parkland. Parks should be protected, **and they should never be an option for development and Toronto Council has acted in spite of the City of Toronto Parkland Strategy.**

Ward 2 residents welcome a culture and recreation centre and there is enough land and available real estate anywhere in Toronto including Etobicoke Centre for The Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation Centre to be built on and all other options should be exhausted before parkland is even considered – which it never should be.

Should we be concerned that CreateTO and the City of Toronto is moving forward to lease and develop parkland across the city?

The development of parkland is not in the interest of community.

The benefit is to the revenue generated by the lease of the land.

As seen with the pandemic – greenspace and parks are vital to a community's health and wellness and with the continued intensification and increased density we need more parks - not less.

There are many Councillors on the Executive Committee who are publicly opposed to the lease and development of Ontario Place and the manner in which it was “confidentially” agreed too without public notice or consultation. These same individuals are working to protect the 850+ trees, the waterfront and the communities right to information – so why is preserving parkland not as important? Why have they not worked to find an alternate suitable location?

The community has many questions and we deserve all the answers:

- WHY did City of Toronto keep the application process starting in 2022 confidential?
- WHY was the community not informed and provided with a public consultation?
- WHY is the City of Toronto ignoring the Parkland Strategy Report to protect parkland?
- WHERE is the Communication, Transparency and Accountability?
- There are many options available - WHY IS PARKLAND BEING LEASED FOR DEVELOPMENT?

City lands and especially parkland should be a benefit for all community members and before this project moves forward any further, residents deserve more information and the rationale by City of Toronto Council to lease and develop parkland.

Once parkland is developed it is lost forever and the benefits to the physical and mental health and wellness of community will be greatly impacted.

We are confident that there is a suitable option and location for The Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation that will not destroy parkland and the benefits to all residents.

We welcome a fully inclusive and constructive consultation to find a suitable location AND a commitment from Toronto Council to ALWAYS protect parkland!

The community looks forward to your response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tracie Napoli'.

Tracie Napoli
Co-chair
Friends of Silver Creek

Cc: Councillor Stephen Holyday, Ward 2 councillor_holyday@toronto.ca
Cathrine Regan exc@toronto.ca