



June 16, 2024

Executive Committee
City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Email: exc@toronto.ca

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

I am a lifelong resident of Ward 2 and a dedicated local community advocate. Through my work, particularly via my community-building newsletter, The Etobicoke Voice, I have had the privilege of engaging with many residents who have expressed a clear need for more community hub spaces in our community.

I am writing today to express my strong support for motion **EX15.6 Proposed Land Lease for the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation (Ward 2)**. I believe this initiative holds great potential to enhance our community by providing much-needed recreational and cultural programming.

First, it is important to acknowledge local concerns raised online about the project's location within a local park. While some worry about the use of parkland, it is crucial to recognize that this particular park area is vast and the space required for the project is underutilized. It is an open field with shade along the edges but none in the centre. With increasing high temps just like the heat we will see this week, this area of the park is not being used to its full potential with a serious lack of shade. The park does in fact have a playground, baseball diamond, and tennis courts/ice rink at the other end which is close to the single family home neighbourhood in this vicinity and will remain intact and untouched for the community to enjoy. This spot is also very close to the new TCDSB elementary school that is opening in September as it is across a path and a grassy area then down a small hill. The proposed project represents an opportunity to breathe new life into this community, turning it into a vibrant hub for all residents.

There's a wealth of green space across Ward 2, but we also have a noticeable lack of community hubs. It seems that the only places for meetups are cafes and donut shops! You can meet for free at the library, but if you want to chat or work in a group, that is not always the best place either. While the New Etobicoke Civic Centre is on the horizon, it remains a considerable distance from the northern part of the ward, highlighting the need for localized community spaces. Let's be honest, we do not have enough space for community groups to meet in our ward. With the TDSB permit process being complicated, library space time hard to find (which I do not blame them for as they have their own great programming) and costs in general rising for private facilities; this lack of space is becoming more of a concern; especially for non-profit and grassroots initiatives!

The proposed Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation is a collaborative project that promises to offer city programming, including recreational activities and community space. These are essential resources that can significantly enrich our community's quality of life.

I urge everyone to consider the positive impacts this project could have if we all work together. Community collaboration has the power to transform spaces and enhance our quality of life. Imagine the benefits of having a new school across the path from city-run recreational programs in close proximity. This would be a tremendous asset for families in our area.

Let's take this opportunity to create a vibrant, inclusive community project that represents an opportunity to enrich the neighbourhood with resources that foster **cultural exchange, recreation, and community bonding.**

Thank you for considering my views. I am confident that with thoughtful planning and community engagement, this project can become a cornerstone of Etobicoke Centre.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Alexander
Editor / Writer
The Etobicoke Voice