



City Councillor  
**Dianne Saxe**  
Ward 11, University–Rosedale

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February 15, 2026

General Government Committee

Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

**Re: Supporting the Evergreen Brick Works Lease**

Dear Colleagues,

I write in support of the staff request for authority to enter an amending and extending lease agreement between the City of Toronto, the TRCA, and Evergreen, for the property known as Evergreen Brick Works. This lease should be renewed and extended as soon as possible. Delays in entering into the new lease are adversely affecting Evergreen's ability to raise funds to operate, program, and upgrade the site.

The Brickworks were historically, a clay quarry and brick manufacturing facility that provided a large portion of the bricks used to build Toronto. However, when the City and TRCA acquired this land, at great expense, it was a badly contaminated post-industrial wasteland in a vulnerable floodplain. And so it remained, until Evergreen, a national charity, stepped in to raise nearly \$100 million and to invest it to manage the contamination, to repair the historic buildings, and to transform this abandoned site into a vibrant community hub, public space leader and gateway to Toronto's ravines.

Evergreen has now successfully operated Evergreen Brick Works for 15 years, despite major floods and the devastation caused by the pandemic. It is an incredible public asset, a demonstration of what ambitious public spaces can achieve.

I've seen first-hand what this organization and this place brings – not just to the ward I represent but to all Torontonians and to visitors from around the world. It's an award-winning destination; a place to connect with nature and each other. It is a living lab of nature-based solutions to climate breakdown and urban flooding. It's a place to experience the best of Toronto food and culture and to celebrate our diverse community through hundreds of events delivered with thousands of partners. It's a place to support hundreds of local businesses and farmers, and by extension, our local economy. And it's a place to get outdoors in community. The Brickworks will be a key node in the walking and cycling Loop Trail that will knit the city together.

Evergreen Brick Works is a significant public asset, a beloved community hub, a tourism destination, and a significant local economic generator, with an estimated annual economic impact of \$10M from its Farmers' Market alone. And Evergreen has done all of this with very limited city support.

It costs Evergreen about \$8 M a year to operate the site and deliver programming, including staff time and:

- \$3.6 million in direct operating costs
- \$3.1 million for programming, and
- \$500k to \$1 million in capital maintenance.

Evergreen works very hard to fund this \$8 M through both fundraising and social enterprises, including the on-site native plant store. However, there is increasing competition for every philanthropic dollar, and the City must not take Evergreen's successes for granted.

Similar public assets in Toronto benefit from financial support from the City. In contrast, Evergreen receives no such support. Recognizing this unfairness, and the significant loss to the City should Evergreen be unable to continue, City staff urged Evergreen to apply to the Cultural Organization Operating Partnership (COOP) for 10% of its direct program and operating costs (approximately \$800k per year). However, COOP is not accepting any new applications at this time.

In addition, the City saddled Evergreen with additional costs by failing to reliably carry out site-related responsibilities that the City undertook to perform, such as maintenance and snow removal.

In all of these circumstances, the predominant objective of the new lease should be to maximize Evergreen's ability to successfully operate, program, and improve the Brickworks site, and to relieve Evergreen of any unnecessary costs that are properly the responsibility of the City.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Dr. Dianne Saxe

Councillor, Ward 11 University-Rosedale