

Friday, August 19, 2016

Office of the Mayor
City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2



Dear Mayor Tory,

Congratulations to both you and Councillor Joe Cressy. The announcement that the city intends to protect more than 21 acres downtown for the Rail Deck Park is a great plan for Toronto. This long-term vision recognizes the need for meaningful park space in the downtown core and Rail Deck Park will be a place of pride for all Torontonians.

As our city's population increases, green space becomes even more valued. That is why we, the Friends of Silver Creek School are writing to you to ask for your help in preserving the Toronto District School Board green space of Silver Creek School located in Etobicoke, Ward 4.

We are a community group dedicated to preserving the two programmes currently operating at Silver Creek School. The Etobicoke Children's Centre provides services to children and their families who experience challenges related to mental health and autism; students come from across Toronto. The Silver Creek Pre School (Toronto City Services), has operated at Silver Creek for 40 years. Students come from across Etobicoke and 80 % of the children have special needs. Please see our website and Facebook page for the testimony of parents who are grateful for the unrelenting support and hope that Silver Creek Pre School provides for children and their families.

In June 2016, The Toronto District School Board declared the Silver Creek School "surplus" with the directive that the TDSB continue discussions with the province regarding the transfer of ownership of the Silver Creek property to the province with the goal of keeping current community services operating on site. The community awaits the report in the fall of 2016 and it is not certain that these programmes will stay in the community.

What is also uncertain is the fate of the green space attached to the school. In February of 2016, you accompanied Councillor John Campbell to our community of Richmond Gardens to view the Eglinton West light-rail transit route. We understand that you also viewed both Silver Creek School and the Silver Creek Park from the parking lot. Had we known of your visit, we would have been delighted to have you tour the school, view the spaces the programmes occupy and meet with directors who would have aptly conveyed the complexity of these programmes. We also would have welcomed the opportunity to paint a picture of children, adults, seniors at Silver Creek Park, our community hub, on any given day. We regret that Councillor Campbell did not inform us of your visit.

Silver Creek Park and the Silver Creek School field are a combined green space that have been actively used for over 50 years by not only Richmond Gardens residents but also by citizens beyond the neighbourhood who come to Silver Creek to play baseball (Martingrove Baseball league and non-organized groups), play soccer (Etobicoke Youth Soccer and non-organized groups), swim and take lessons (Richmond Gardens Pool), play tennis (Silver Creek Seniors Club & community), enjoy the new playground (Silver Creek Park Rejuvenation Project), walk the dog, meet friends and neighbours and gather for community celebrations and picnics.

We are very concerned that the Silver Creek School TDSB green space may be sold for development purposes. If that should happen, approximately a third of green space will be removed from the combined site. One baseball and one soccer field that are both actively used by youth organizations will disappear. Furthermore, the city reports that park and pool services may be impacted. This is of great concern to residents because the combined parkland space is important to the physical and mental well-being of all generations.

In addition, if the TDSB green space is sold and developed, the grass field that absorbs rain runoff flowing downhill from Eglinton Avenue would disappear. Richmond Gardens experienced extensive water damage from the extreme rainstorm of 2013. Since that time, the grassy fields of Eglinton Avenue West (from Widdicombe Hill to Wincott Avenue) have been sold by Build Toronto and developed for housing, thereby reducing the rate of rainwater absorption along this avenue. The loss of the TDSB green space will have negative environmental implications.

The new housing on Eglinton Avenue West will increase demand for parkland. A total of 391 townhouses have been/are being currently built and 283 apartments are proposed for a seniors building – a total of 575 units. And how many units will be approved for the Richview Square site, now owned by Trinity Group? Rumour has it that plans for a high-rise building will be submitted to the city. This increasing density will affect the ratio of local parkland per population, which was 0.80 to 1.56 hectares per 1000 people in our community according to the Local Parkland Provision – Map B, a city planning document of 2006. We believe that ratios have changed and will continue to change as condominium developments are underway along the major western corridors of Eglinton, Dundas, Bloor, Queensway, Lake Shore. Converting the TDSB Silver Creek green space to city owned parkland would preserve existing recreational space for a growing community.

We are aware that in comparison to the city core, Etobicoke does have more green space. The City of Toronto Ward 4 map reflects that landscape, but after three golf courses are eliminated and the ravine/river trails are noted, the amount of neighbourhood parkland where playgrounds, pools, playing fields exist can be seen in a different light. **Etobicoke is on the path of intensification but please be aware that we are not asking for more green space. Instead, we are asking for a long-term vision that will preserve existing public green space to serve future generations of Torontonians.** Silver Creek Park and the adjoining TDSB lands form a vital community hub in Etobicoke.

We have questions and concerns about information within the Silver Creek profile prepared by Toronto Social Development, Finance and Administration for the purposes of measuring Community Asset Utilization Rate. We have requested a meeting with Kelly Murphy, Social Policy Development Officer and submitted our questions as requested on July 28, 2016. We consider that we, the community, are relevant Toronto stakeholders but as of this date our request for a meeting has not been granted.

We thank Councillor John Campbell for providing an amendment to EX16.21 Schools as Community Assets: Review and Prioritization of 23 TDSB Properties:

- b. City Council encourage the Government of Ontario to pursue its expressed interests in acquisition of the property municipally known as 155 McNicoll Avenue (McNicoll Public School) and in acquisition of the property municipally known as 65 Hartsdale Drive (Silver Creek Public School) properties; both of which are sites for delivery of provincially-funded children's mental health and developmental services and to ensure public access to the green space behind the buildings and ongoing delivery of services onsite;

But, by his own admission, Councillor Campbell feels that there is nothing more that he can do to preserve the green space as the city doesn't have the funds to purchase the Silver Creek School field.

Friends of Silver Creek School ask the City of Toronto:

- Could the city, TDSB and the province come to a creative agreement regarding the preservation of the Silver Creek School green space?
- Could Section 42 and Section 37 funds of present and future developments contribute towards the purchase of this land?
- Could philanthropic donors contribute funds to ensure that soccer and baseball playing fields are preserved in communities?

In closing, we invite you to visit our community to learn more about Silver Creek School and Silver Creek Park and talk to residents about what their community means to them– you will be warmly received.

- Please join us the September 10th weekend in Silver Creek Park, one of the two local parks where Martingrove Baseball will be hosting the championship weekend for youth ages 4 to 15 years.
- **We would also welcome your attendance at the September 15th Open House at Silver Creek School where the community is invited to view Silver Creek School, learn about the programmes and receive updates from local representatives about the future of Silver Creek School.**

We look forward to your responses to the questions above.

Warm Regards,

On behalf of the Friends of Silver Creek School committee



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Cc: Councillor John Campbell, Ward 4
Yvan Baker, MPP, Etobicoke Central