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Hamilton City Council

RE: Dundas Laneway Privatization

Monday June 26th, 2017.

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of Council,

As a resident of Dundas, I was very troubled to learn that the Public Works Committee voted in favour of selling the public laneway near Sydenham Road. There are a number of reasons that I am concerned about this - and you should be as well.

I have read through many of the letters that have already been sent to you, expressing opposition to the sale of the laneway. I share many of the same concerns regarding safety, devaluation of public property, and the erosion of the character and heritage of Dundas. Indeed, there is little I can add to these arguments other than echo my agreement.

Instead, I am choosing to focus on the politics of this issue.

According to the published financial statements of several members of Council, Len Medeiros, the applicant in this case, donated to numerous campaigns. Furthermore, many members of council have received donations from companies with whom Mr. Medeiros is associated.

All of the donations listed in the attached table come from companies that share the same address: 1147 Gardner Road, Ancaster, Ontario. The names of "President or Business Manager" and "Authorized Representative" cited in the table are taken from the official financial statements of the relevant councillors. As you can see there is some inconsistency in terms of who has been identified in these roles.

In total, Mr. Medeiros, or corporations with whom he is associated, donated over \$10,000 to the campaigns of a majority of the elected city councillors. I have read statements from a number of councillors suggesting that campaign donations do not influence their voting behaviour. If this is the case, Hamilton Councillors are a rare anomaly. Furthermore, donors in this municipality must be unusually altruistic to part with such large sums of money with no expectation that future dealings with elected officials will be swayed by their generosity.

As a Civics and Politics teacher, I begin all of my courses with a discussion of power. We review the three main ways in which power can be exercised: authority, influence and coercion. As a

class we then examine how power impacts the functioning of our democracy. One of the key tenets of democracy is that everyone is equal – one person, one vote. Even in grade 10 however, my students are immediately skeptical. They intuitively know that people do not have equal power over the decisions of our government. They quickly realize that voting is but one way of exercising power and that those with access to resources (money) can wield disproportionate influence over their elected officials.

The issue of the sale of this public laneway, which has been a part of the heritage of this city for over 160 years, seems to me, to be a perfect example of this unfortunate hazard in modern democracies. Indeed, it is tempting to use it as a case study in my classroom. It is local, relevant, and timely. If I were to use it in my class, I might ask my students the following questions:

1. Based on the donation amounts listed in the table, what do you think the maximum contribution one donor can make to a campaign is?
2. What do you notice about the names associated with the three companies that are listed in the table? What might explain the inconsistency?
3. Why do you think a corporation would donate so much money to so many different candidates?
4. Why do you think these corporations donated more money to some candidates than others?
5. How would you expect these candidates to vote if faced with an issue involving this donor?
6. After examining this table, what questions do you have?

After teaching for eighteen years, I am quite certain I know what my students' reactions would be. No doubt they would question your impartiality in this matter. Certainly, I believe it is fair to conclude your independence is compromised.

Should council vote to sell the laneway to Mr. Medeiros, the perception that Hamilton City Hall is being run by developers will only be strengthened. Furthermore, it will make for an unfortunate – albeit predictable - conclusion to my lesson on power, politics, and influence.

On a more positive note however, it may motivate some of my students to get involved in local politics. One of the many things I have learned from my students over the years is that there is no motivator as strong as a sense of injustice.

I hope that you will prove me wrong and that you will vote against the sale of the public laneway.

Sincerely,

Alice Smith

Table 1: Donations to 2014 Election Campaigns (and the 2016 By-Election Campaign*)

<i>Councillor or Mayor</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>President or Business Manager</i>	<i>Authorized Representative</i>
Fred Eisenberger (Mayor)	Urban Core Developments	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
Jason Farr (Ward 2)	Dundas Self Storage	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Len Medeiros
Sam Merulla (Ward 4)	Ancaster Self Storage	\$750	Mario Nesci	Sergio Manchia
	Dundas Self Storage	\$750	Len Medeiros	Len Medeiros
	Urban Core Developments	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
Chad Collins (Ward 5)	Ancaster Self Storage	\$750	Mario Nesci	Sergio Manchia
	Urban Core Developments	\$750	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
	Urban Core Developments	\$500 (returned?)	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
Tom Jackson (Ward 6)	Urban Core Developments	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
Donna Skelly* (Ward 7)	Ancaster Self Storage	\$750	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
	Dundas Self Storage	\$350	Len Medeiros	Len Medeiros
Terry Whitehead (Ward 8)	Ancaster Self Storage	\$750	Mario Nesci	Sergio Manchia
	Urban Core Developments	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
Maria Pearson (Ward 10)	Dundas Self Storage	\$500	Len Medeiros	Len Medeiros
	Urban Core Developments	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Sacha Aide
Lloyd Ferguson (Ward 12)	Ancaster Self Storage	\$750	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia
Arleen Vanderbeek (Ward 13)	Dundas Self Storage	\$750	Len Medeiros	Not specified
Robert Pasuta (Ward 14)	Ancaster Self Storage	\$500	Sergio Manchia	Sergio Manchia