Hon. Steven
FLETCHER
MLA ASSINIBOIA

January 16, 2018

Re: Vimy Arena site

His worship Brian Bowman
Mayor of Winnipeg

Dear Brian,

This week, EPC is intending to vote for a good cause and against another good cause. Leadership requires productive solutions.

There is a third way to accommodate both the need, demand and the commitments made to the people of St. James while also meeting the goals of the Bruce Oake Foundation.

Let's all work together to maximize the recreational opportunities for the people of St. James. In the same instance, let's all agree to a thoughtful, inclusive discussion on the opioid crisis. How can elected officials and the public can work together to create maximum opportunities for all Manitobans to solve our social challenges.

Energy should be focussed on working on common goals, rather than creating cynical, divisive false choices in public policy.

Please table the land transfer proposal of 255 Hamilton Avenue.

Let's work together on the best long-term outcome for all parties.

The land transfer for 255 Hamilton Avenue seems to have been initiated by the Minister responsible for Housing.

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This recreational space was deemed available for repurposing in the City Council decision of 2013.

In the decision, commitments were made to the community, no commitments have materialized.

I have represented the people of Assiniboia at the Federal and Provincial level since 2004.

The overwhelming sentiment in the community is that the property should remain zoned as recreational. The community also wants the opioid crisis, obesity, and diabetes pandemic to be addressed by thoughtful public policy.

The loophole used to transfer recreational property to the Province further undermines the commitments made to the community in the 2013 City council decision.

The recreational space has been used for this purpose for over 100 years.

The amazing historic significance of Sturgeon Creek and the rehabilitation of the Sturgeon Creek watershed have been completely ignored.

All of the arguments used to save Woodhaven Park from condo development many years ago, apply to this situation.

I hope we all agree that the development of that recreational and greenspace along Sturgeon Creek would have been a catastrophe for the area. Why is the City trying to do the same thing again?

In fact, when the municipalities of St. James and Assiniboia joined Unicity, commitments were made to the community to guarantee parks and recreational land that already existed.

Therefore, the original Unicity consensus is being violated once again.

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Too often, the actions taken by the previous city administration, when dealing with land transfer and other projects, were a disgrace.

Fire stations built on land the city still does not own, cost over runs for the headquarters police station, delays and over budget on capital projects have cost the city profoundly.

Hence the quality of life, economic opportunity, and increases the burden on taxpayers have had negative effects on all Manitobans.

On Monday January 8, 2018, I presented to and attended the City Council standing committee on this issue and stayed for the additional 10 hours to listen to the dozens of presentations.

It was astonishing to hear the city auditors, the fairness commissioner, the integrity officer, and the city bureaucracy, one way or another, all publicly wash their hands of any responsibility related to the failed process and ignoring of the cities own policies on this land transfer.

The people who are paid to help City Council make good public policy decisions were simply ignored with a predetermined vote. When that happened during the last Council, audits were called, monies spent, and now an RCMP investigation because significant processes were by-passed. This is no different.

It is very disappointing for the people of St. James that their former City Councillor, who voted for the 2013 transfer of land, is not enforcing the conditions attached to the vote. The same person who is now the Minister Responsible for Housing has obviously not fulfilled the minimum requirements for due diligence.

Apparently, the original request from the province for this one specific piece of land. Why?

It is also relevant that this land is priceless for the people of St. James, but has been quantified to be worth 1.43 million dollars is being sold to the province for $1.00. How is this city ever going to get its financial house in order by giving away assets?

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On Monday, it was again revealed that no other sites were considered for the Bruce Oake facility. This organization stated several times that they were going to come to Winnipeg regardless of the site.

Their request is simply to have a site that fits in their business plan as described in Section 5.1. The land must be such as to allow for expansion of the facility. The direct statement from the business plan is,

"Bruce Oake Recovery Centre requires a safe neighbourhood, close to public transportation with space for future expansion and growth. The facility must be accessible for those with disabilities."

The public has not been made aware of many other components of the business plan such as Section 5.2 which states,

"It is expected that the facility will be smaller to begin with but as community relationships are built and with increased credibility over time, the results will foster growth and expansion of facility in the future may be considered. It has also been contemplated that a lease/buy-back arrangement may be put in place with a developer for the facilities. Such an arrangement would need to be considered on a case by case basis."

Having the opportunity to have reviewed hundreds of projects big and small at the highest levels in the Federal Government, it is safe to say that the business plan (regardless of the site) is incomplete and does not meet the minimum standards that one would expect for such a plan.

If this business plan had been presented to an MBA class it would receive an F.

An F is the same grade the city has received by the public regarding the past performance of its decision-making process.

The Vimy Arena site is another example of a long list of proposals that have not been transparent, consultative and ill-planned.

We have seen evidence of poor decision making under the current City bureaucracy, and now we see it by our elected representatives.

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Sterling Lyon Parkway in Charleswood, is now pending an audit too, as are many of the other decisions made by the previous Council.

It is interesting to note that the very councillor, Paula Havixbeck who raised the alarm bells on many of the council made in 2013 has been proven correct again with her comments about compensation with a local union leader.

Paula Havixbeck probably deserves an apology. But who is going to apologize for all the other blunders that occurred at city hall?

Can the residents of St. James expect an apology in 10 years or can city hall and the province make decisions properly in the first place.

Is the City going to create a win-win-win situation? Or are the residents of Winnipeg going to experience another case of institutional inertia deja-vu?

Thomas Edison said, “We cannot solve problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

Sincerely,

Steven Fletcher

Honourable Steven Fletcher P.C, P.Eng, MBA
Member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly
Assiniboia

Cc; City Council
Friends of Sturgeon Creek
Concerned citizens

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