



## 230 FIGHTBACK

### A PROGRESSIVE MAYOR WOULD CHALLENGE THE DEVELOPERS

An Open Letter to Mayor Olivia Chow

Mayor Chow:

The last meeting of the Toronto and East York Community Council dealt with a Zoning application, supported by City staff, that would allow KingSett Capital to build a luxury condo tower at 214-230 Sherbourne. Faced with strong community opposition to the application, the Community Council voted to put the matter before the full Council without any recommendation.

The property at this location is situated in the very heart of a poor working-class community with the most urgent housing needs and the proposed project would advance a gentrification process that is already pushing low-income residents out of the area to a major degree.

KingSett previously outbid the City for this site but has since offered to allow it to become municipally owned. However, the developer wants a prohibitive price for this that would cover the costs of its speculative antics. Your office and the local Councillor have suggested that there is still an interest in acquiring the property but there appears to be no strategy to ensure that this occurs. Indeed, 214-230 Sherbourne has been removed from the revitalization plan for the area and effectively surrendered to the process of upscale redevelopment.

We understand that you don't intend to oppose KingSett's zoning application, a position that we find completely outrageous. Other members of Council have absurdly suggested that the zoning of the property on the developer's terms will somehow increase the possibility of housing the needs of the community being created. If the application is approved, KingSett will be closer to its goal of building luxury housing and in a more favourable position to sell it to another investor for the same purpose. The failure to oppose the application is clearly a step backwards that the community opposes.

We have also heard the refrain that provincial legislation and powers are such that a refusal to approve the application would simply be overturned. This excuse raises quite starkly the question of just how a progressive mayor and housing advocate would proceed in this matter and, in this regard, we have some suggestions.

First of all, a progressive mayor would not cozy up to the representatives of the agenda of greed and displacement that is driving the housing crisis in Toronto. You recently held a 'fireside chat' with John Baird, an infamous right-wing Tory and, at present, a lobbyist for KingSett Capital. To speak in terms of a shared vision with such an individual is quite appalling.

Secondly, a progressive mayor would challenge the provincial government. She would not be prepared to rubber stamp zoning applications for projects that would make housing in this city even less affordable. She would ensure that Council rejected such steps and would take the fight to the province and rally the community behind her in the process. She would take up a political fight against the power of the developers and fight the commodification of housing that is causing such terrible harm.

A progressive mayor would also stop greasing the wheels of the developers destructive operations. KingSett Capital, for example, would be made to pay a price for taking the property at 214-230 Sherbourne when it knew very well that it was needed for a project based on community needs. There would be no business as usual with this operator as long as it held onto the property.

At the Community Council, the idea was raised that a rejection of the application might lead to charges of being 'anti-development.' A progressive mayor would have very robust and clear plans to meet the housing needs of our communities but would be only too ready to publicly reject the brand of development that KingSett represents.

We must say, very frankly, that we don't expect you to take our advice on how to proceed. For that reason, we must make it clear that, no matter what is decided with regard to KingSett's zoning application, we intend to ensure that its destructive project is defeated and that social housing is built at this vital location.

Yours truly,

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