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Friday, November 5th, 2021

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault  
Fontaine Building 12th floor  
200 Sacré-Coeur Blvd  
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3

Dear Minister Guilbeault,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Canada's Environment Minister. I hope this note finds you well as you work for change at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

We write in our capacity as MPP for Ottawa Centre and City Councilor for Capital Ward in the City of Ottawa to flag an urgent issue with significant climate impacts: the construction of the new Civic Hospital that will substantially take place on federal lands in the Central Experimental Farm and the extend and impact of the working hospital will be very close to the World Heritage site of the Rideau Canal and Dows Lake. We need your help to ensure we properly understand how this project fits within Canada's commitment to respond to our world's climate change emergency and that it complies with the need for an independent environment assessment under federal environmental legislation.

For years, the Ottawa Hospital promised to hold public consultations to ensure "the best possible integration with the surrounding community." Pledges were made to ensure the new Civic Hospital would be linked to public transit, that parking would be half of what is now proposed (and buried underground), and that active transportation would be encouraged. These assertions have been proven false.

A massive parking garage for 2500 cars, comparable to what exists at the Ottawa Airport, is slated for construction in March 2022. This parking garage will replace Queen Juliana Park, and interrupt the Trillium Bike Path, a key node of active transportation infrastructure in Ottawa. Moreover, unless 65% of the arrivals at the site are by public transit, bicycle or on foot, the garage, and the multiple on-grade parking lots planned for the site will be insufficient for the number of cars destined to arrive on the site. Six large buildings - the Civic Hospital including a Rehab centre, the Research Tower, 3 'multi-use' towers along Carling Avenue, and the Heart Institute - are planned for this site. These will have a much greater population than the current Civic Hospital site.

The new Civic Hospital and its parking garage will also remove at least 524 mature trees from a key part of Ottawa's urban tree canopy which lies within federal lands. This flies in the face of the federal government's public commitments to preserve and increase the nation's tree canopy, to combat global climate change.

Decades of funding cuts has led to a situation where 13 percent of hospital revenue now comes from fees charged for parking and other discretionary items. It is no exaggeration to say parking revenue buys MRI machines and other critical medical equipment. The Ontario Hospital Association has noted this "...represents core funding sources and are not discretionary forms of "extra" revenue". Moreover, drainage from the medical equipment could impact on the fish bearing waters of Dows Lake and the Rideau Canal.



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Such potential pollution of federal waterways should be subject to an independent environmental assessment as required under federal environmental legislation.

The federal government leased the lands in question for 99 years to the Ottawa Hospital for \$1 in 2018, and did so without conducting an environmental assessment that was made available to the public. 35% of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in Ontario are due to personal and commercial transportation, representing the single largest source of GHG; the new Civic Hospital project does nothing to change that trend. Encouraging active and public transportation and protecting our urban tree canopy on federal lands are crucial sustainability measures. These are undermined by this project as it stands.

It is also questionable about the extent to which Algonquin leadership has been consulted on the environmental impacts of this project, and this land rests on the unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin territory. We need an inspired healing hub in the heart of our city, but we cannot do this at the expense of our environment.

Residents of Ottawa Centre are deeply concerned about how no evidence has been presented for this project's compliance with an independent environmental assessment and its long term sustainability. This project is being rushed through existing municipal, provincial, and federal approval processes, and connected lobbyists are working hard to make this happen.

Minister Guilbeault, we need your help to ensure transparency, sustainability, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples are at the heart of the new Civic Hospital campus. We are petitioning you for an urgent (and public) Environmental Impact Assessment under the Impact Assessment Act for this project, and we need you to take immediate action in this regard.

Joel Harden, MPP for Ottawa Centre

Shawn Menard, Ottawa City Councillor

CC:

Yasir Naqvi, MP for Ottawa Centre  
Jeff Leiper, Ottawa City Councillor  
Algonquin Anishinabeg Tribal Council  
Dow's Lake Residents' Association  
Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association