

# HINTONBURG

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We believe that the planning and development approvals process in Ottawa has become increasingly flawed. Several recent reports in the press have highlighted specific serious issues, including the use of private consultants who routinely work for the development industry to also process development applications for the city, and commitments made by City Planning Staff to support specific rezoning during confidential preconsultation. In general, the failure to have updated the comprehensive zoning bylaw since amalgamation has led to a situation where virtually all major development has required rezoning, leading to a lack of transparency and predictability, and contributing to the specific problems noted above. Finally, the level of campaign contributions to City Councillors and the Mayor by the development industry calls into question the independence of Council from inappropriate influence over the development approvals process, where a decision of Council can be worth many millions of dollars to a campaign contributor.

Because of these issues, we no longer have confidence in the transparency, fairness, and integrity of the planning approvals process in Ottawa. To help restore public trust, we call on the Mayor and City Council to take the following four actions:

- 1. Immediately end the practice of hiring private planning consultants to process development applications within the city's Planning Approvals branch.** Any individual or consulting firm who represents the development industry in Ottawa must be prohibited from also processing applications within the City's Planning Department at the same time.
- 2. Immediately end the practice of the City committing to support any specific change in zoning during confidential preconsultations with a developer or property owner.** The City must develop a procedure where the preconsultation process cannot include a commitment from City Staff before Councillors and the public are even informed that changes to zoning will be sought.
- 3. Commit to working towards banning campaign contributions from the development industry and ban gifts to Councillors.** The practice of candidates for Council accepting campaign contributions from those whose development applications then come before Planning Committee and Council must be ended. While each contribution may not by itself be sufficient to influence a Councillor, the effect of the sum of industry contributions in aggregate on the finances of many campaigns has been very substantial. Indeed, some candidates, including current Councillors, have received a major portion of their campaign funding from developers and those associated with the development industry. The City must commit to working with the province toward ending campaign contributions from an industry that is directly regulated by

Council. Individual Councillors must now commit to rejecting campaign contributions from the development industry if seeking re-election. Furthermore, Councillors must not accept gifts, including invitations to attend events (for example, professional sporting events) as guests. This includes the practice of accepting gifts and then donating them to charity, since this still provides a benefit to the Councillor in terms of generating good will.

**4. Update the comprehensive zoning bylaw so that it implements the Official Plan.** The Zoning Bylaw has not been updated since amalgamation, except where secondary plans have been approved. This has resulted in the very large number of re-zoning applications that are contributing directly to a loss of public confidence in Ottawa's planning and development approvals processes. It is our understanding that the Planning Act requires the zoning bylaw to implement the Official Plan, and therefore Ottawa is not in compliance. Therefore, as part of the Official Plan review now under way, resources must be allocated to implement the changes to the comprehensive zoning bylaw required to implement the Official Plan, so that the entire comprehensive zoning bylaw can be brought into compliance within a short period after approval of the revised Official Plan.