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Greg Essensa
Chief Electoral Officer Elections Ontario
51 Rolark Drive
Toronto, ON M1R 31

February 7, 2020

Dear CEO Essensa:

I write to follow-up on MPP Taras Natyshak's letter of February 3 concerning new information about the third-party political advertisements placed by "Vaughan Working Families" in Ontario newspapers last weekend. This new information raises serious concerns that this third-party group may have acted in collusion with Doug Ford's governing PC Party in violation of the Election Finances Act.

This morning, the *Toronto Star* revealed that the group calling itself "Vaughan Working Families" had its invoices for these advertisements sent to the law firm Loopstra Nixon and that Quinto Annibale, firm partner, had queries of the ads directed to him. Annibale is a director of the group "Vaughan Working Families," a name registered in 2018 by an advocacy group called "Vaughan Health Campus of Care" (VHCC).

There is a disturbingly close relationship between VHCC, the Progressive Conservative party and Doug Ford's Education Minister Stephen Lecce, the MPP for Vaughan:

- The Chair of VHCC is Michael DeGasperis, a Conservative campaign volunteer and PC donor
- DeGasperis and Stephen Lecce first worked together in 2010 when DeGasperis served as fundraising Co-Chair for the 2010 campaign to elect Julian Fantino as MP. Lecce served as that campaign's press secretary while DeGasperis served as its campaign co-chair for fundraising.
- From 2010 to 2011, Lecce served as Fantino's campaign manager in the 2011 federal election, when several Conservatives quit the Fantino campaign following a \$10 million federal grant to VHCC. Lecce knew about this money and concern, and dismissed concerns about where the money was spent and allegations that it had only been given due to close connections between DeGasperis and the Conservative Party.
- Quinto Annibale is also a significant PC Party supporter. He and "Quinto Annibale Professional Corporation" have donated over \$31,000 to the Progressive Conservative Party over the last 6 years, and the Ford Government appointed him recently as Vice-Chair of the LCBO.



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It is difficult to believe that people who worked so closely with Stephen Lecce and Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Party would keep their plans for an expensive advertising campaign a secret from their long-time allies and friends. It is also hard to believe that an organization supposedly focussed on health care in Vaughan would spontaneously decide to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars echoing government messaging on education.

Section 37.12(8) of the Election Finances Act is clear:

Certification regarding no coordination

(8) Every registered third party in its third party political advertising report shall certify that the registered third party and its agents, employees, and independent contractors did not act in coordination with any registered political party, registered candidate, registered constituency association, registered nomination contestant, or registered leadership contestant, or any of their agents, employees or independent contractor

If the "Vaughan Working Families" organization collaborated with Stephen Lecce or the PC Party when producing the ads, they would be breaking the law. I ask that you investigate.

Sincerely,

Peter Tabuns
MPP Toronto-Danforth