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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

February 16, 2017

Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.  
Chairman and Chief Strategy Officer  
WL Ross & Co. LLC  
1166 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Ross:

Thank you for the time you have spent appearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and answering numerous written questions submitted by its members. Given your position as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Cyprus and a substantial investor, we write today to request any additional information you may have regarding contacts between Russian interests and the Trump presidential campaign and the Trump Organization.

Media reports have noted a substantial degree of Russian involvement and financial interest in the Bank of Cyprus. The second largest shareholder in the Bank of Cyprus is Renova Corporation, a Russian conglomerate headed by Viktor Vekselberg.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Vekselberg is an associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin and served on the board of the Russian oil company Rosneft, which is majority-owned by the Russian government and was placed under U.S. sanctions in 2014 after Russia's claimed annexation of Crimea.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the former Vice Chairman of the Bank of Cyprus was Vladimir Strzhalkovsky.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Strzhalkovsky is also a longtime associate of President Putin.<sup>4</sup> The two served together in the K.G.B. in what was then Leningrad, and Mr. Strzhalkovsky later served as Russia's Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade and head of Russia's Federal Tourism Agency.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Trump's Pick for Commerce Secretary Shares a Business Circle with Putin Associates*, McClatchy (Dec. 20, 2016) (online at <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/article121981259.html>).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* See also Rosneft, Shareholder Structure (online at [https://www.rosneft.com/Investors/Equity/Shareholder\\_structure/](https://www.rosneft.com/Investors/Equity/Shareholder_structure/)).

<sup>3</sup> Bank of Cyprus, Annual Corporate Governance Report 2015 (available at <http://www.bankofcyprus.com/en-GB/Start/Corporate-Governance/Annual-Corporate-Governance-Report-/>).

<sup>4</sup> *Mining Executive Receives Payout of \$100 Million, Russia's Largest Ever*, New York Times (Dec. 17, 2012) (online at <http://nyti.ms/U5gtjT>).

<sup>5</sup> See *id.*

Furthermore, it has been previously reported that Russian shareholders once controlled a majority of the shares of the Bank of Cyprus.<sup>6</sup>

In light of these links between the Russian government and the Bank of Cyprus – in addition to recent revelations about Russian contacts with former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn and multiple Trump campaign officials and Russian government-directed efforts to meddle in the U.S. presidential election – we request that you answer the following:

- 1) In a post-hearing question for the record, Senator Maria Cantwell asked about your relationships with Russian investors in the Bank of Cyprus. In your January 22, 2017, response, you stated, “I had never had dealings with any of them prior to my investment in the Bank. I have only met once, for one hour, the principal Russian investor, and then only after he had invested in the Bank.” Please provide details of this meeting, including the person(s) involved, dates, and topics discussed.
- 2) Are you aware of any contacts between any individuals currently or formerly associated the Bank of Cyprus and anyone affiliated with the Trump presidential campaign or the Trump Organization? If so, please detail these contacts, including the person(s) involved, dates, and the topics discussed.
- 3) Are you aware of any loans made by the Bank of Cyprus to the Trump Organization, directly or through another financial institution, its directors or officers, or any affiliated individuals or entities? If so, please detail the amount and terms of any such loan.
- 4) Are you aware of any efforts by any of the leadership of the Bank of Cyprus or anyone with an ownership interest in the Bank of Cyprus to directly or indirectly influence U.S. elections or policy positions?
- 5) Did you have any contacts with current or former Russian government or intelligence officials during the 2016 presidential campaign? If so, please detail these contacts, including the person(s) involved, dates, and the topics discussed.

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<sup>6</sup> *Cyprus Bank's Bailout Hands Ownership to Russian Plutocrats*, New York Times (Aug. 21, 2013) (online at <https://nyti.ms/14jVi3p>).

- 6) Are you aware of any contacts between current or former Russian government or intelligence officials and any individuals currently or formerly associated with the Trump presidential campaign or the Trump Organization? If so, please detail these contacts, including the person(s) involved, dates, and the topics discussed.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,



BILL NELSON  
Ranking Member



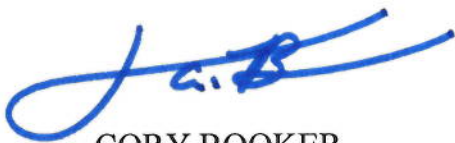
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Member