

Presentation to the

**Senate Committee**

**on**

**Social Affairs, Science and Technology**

March 6, 2008

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## **Presentation to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology**

Thank you for inviting the City of Toronto to make a presentation on affordable housing to this committee.

On behalf of Mayor David Miller and City Council, I wish to commend you for including affordable housing as a priority in your work.

### **Our Mutual Success**

With some 1.4 million Canadian households in housing need – more than 200,000 in the City of Toronto – the need for national action is real and urgent.

I am here today to testify to the progress we are making through the affordable housing partnership between the City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada.

This year, approximately 2,500 low-income residents will get a new lease on life with the opening of 1,000 new affordable homes in Toronto, made possible through federal investments from the Affordable Housing Program.

As well, almost 700 Toronto families and individuals will live in safer and better maintained homes, from investments made through the federal Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

And some 1,500 Toronto homeless people will have found homes in the past three years thanks to the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Finally, due to the federal government's long-term investment through the National Social Housing Program, more than 250,000 Toronto residents will continue to live in safe and affordable homes.

## **The Power of Affordable Housing**

These national housing and homeless programs and the positive results they produce are no less than “housing life rafts” to families and individuals who have been set adrift in a turbulent housing market they cannot compete in or afford.

I am here today to testify that the continuation of national housing programs and homeless initiatives is essential if Toronto is to continue to thrive while providing opportunity for all.

To advance our collective efforts, the City of Toronto recently released an affordable housing framework called Housing Opportunities Toronto. The framework calls for a long-term approach to affordable housing matched by sufficient and sustainable investments and recommends specific actions that all three governments can take.

When we examined the impact of investing in affordable housing we discovered the positive power of affordable housing.

We discovered that affordable housing promotes and sustains four key objectives: economic development, environmental sustainability, livable neighbourhoods and healthy people.

- **Economic development:** by enabling key workers to live where they work and attracting skilled labour and newcomers
- **Environmental sustainability:** by reducing energy costs to low-income families and reducing consumption of energy from polluting sources
- **Livable neighbourhoods:** by promoting mixed-income communities and better outcomes for low-income people – including supporting community safety in priority neighbourhoods
- **Healthy people:** by promoting mental and physical health and reducing pressure on our health care system

## **What Toronto and Canada Need to Succeed**

In 2007, the three orders of government invested \$716.8 million in affordable housing and homeless programs in Toronto.

Our Housing Opportunities Toronto framework proposes that, over time, an additional \$469 million annually is required to address the unmet housing need of 200,000 households.

Key investments are essential to help the homeless, assist renters, create new housing, repair existing homes and provide first-time home ownership assistance.

But today, just one week after the release of the federal budget, we still require a sign – a commitment - from the federal government that it will respect and extend its legacy of housing low- and moderate-income Canadians.

We require a renewed commitment in 2008 to key federal initiatives that are to expire in March 2009: the Affordable Housing Program, the Homelessness Partnering Initiative and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. We require the re-investment of federal social housing funding to help repair and rehabilitate Toronto's 90,000 units.

Further investments in new affordable housing will pay very big dividends and build a stronger and healthier city.

That is why the City of Toronto's pre-budget submission called on Ottawa to:

*“deliver a national action plan on housing and homelessness which would renew and strengthen federal investments over the long-term and provide funding of \$3.35 billion annually to be shared by all orders of government.”*

Federal investment is needed to realize the goal of revitalizing public housing communities built 40 to 50 years ago – Toronto Community Housing has started the task with the redevelopment of Regent Park – but much more needs to be done.



Federal investment is also needed to realize the potential of affordable housing first proposed twenty years ago in the West Don Lands, where some 1,200 affordable homes require funding as part of Toronto's waterfront renewal.

These are just two examples of the potential and opportunity to be created through new investments in affordable housing.

With our private sector and community partners, the City of Toronto stands ready and willing to make this and much more happen.

Once again, on behalf of the City of Toronto, I wish to thank this committee for the opportunity to speak to you today and to urge your support for continued national action on affordable housing.

