

DEPUTATION



TO: Executive Committee, Toronto City Council

DATE: Wednesday, January 23, 2018

RE: Housing Now Initiative

Good morning, I'm here on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Housing Now Initiative.

We are encouraged by the steps the City is taking towards providing opportunities to increase affordable housing development and are pleased to be back at work with all of you and the entire new City Council on ending chronic homelessness in Toronto.

It is important to note at the beginning that we are in a better place than were a year ago with respect to shelter, support and emergency services for those experiencing homelessness, including during these harsh winter months. People seeking shelter and respite services are currently not being turned away and there is basic immediate support for those in need. That being said, coming in to a shelter or respite is not possible for everyone outside, and homelessness still remains a crisis in this city.

The senseless deaths at the beginning of 2019 of two women experiencing homelessness, Crystal Papineau and Hang Vo, and the recent cold snap further highlights the urgent need for more deeply affordable and supportive housing in Toronto that people experiencing chronic homelessness can more readily access. To make this a reality, we need to get out of the homelessness management business and focus on more housing options to end it once and for all. To that end, above what is currently planned, we do not support further shelter expansion.

To share a quote I heard recently..."it doesn't take a village but a city." This City is moving in the right direction towards more affordable housing and there are many commendable aspects of the Housing Now Initiative including:

- A much stronger effort by the City to bring its housing divisions and structures together to address the continuum of housing and support responses needed;
- The introduction of a Housing Secretariat to manage the overall implementation of the Housing Now Initiative, including directing City activity on predevelopment work and planning guidance/pre-approvals;
- Making it easier for both non-profit and private developers to create new affordable rental and supportive housing units in Toronto, including the provision of a non-profit housing capacity fund and the provision of flexible delegated approvals; and
- The intention of making a coordinated submission to the federal National Housing Supply Co-Investment Fund which is essential to set up the City as a key local enabler and facilitator and ensure Toronto gets its share of these critical federal resources.

While these are all welcome, Housing Now can also go further in making a significant dent in ending chronic homelessness. To that affect, we have the following recommendations:

- 1. Allocate a portion of the land surplus to deeply affordable and supportive housing**
 - We need to ensure, that at least one-third of the 11 surplus sites are allocated for deeply affordable and supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness.

- Because most people experiencing homelessness in Toronto have very low incomes, a mechanism will be required to ensure that these 3,000+ targeted units are affordable for this population.
- 2. Allocate a portion of the National Housing Strategy resources to build and/or create housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.**
 - In earlier deputations and communications the TAEH has advocated that a portion of the National Housing Strategy resources be designated to build and/or create housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.
 - As Housing Now aims to leverage the NHS, it is a perfect place to explore how to ensure that the type of housing and supports, including those that create deep affordability, – needed to reduce and end chronic homelessness becomes a reality.
 - 3. Provide a portable rent supplement for everyone in a City-funded homeless program**
 - To ensure housing is deeply affordable for people experiencing homelessness, anyone who is living for 12 months or more in a City-funded homeless program (shelter, respite and other programs) should automatically become eligible for a portable housing allowance.
 - 4. Invest in more supportive housing**
 - During the end of the last Council's term an important motion was passed to create 18,000 supportive housing units in Toronto over the next ten years – at a rate of 1,800 per year. The Housing Now Initiative is a tool that can ensure this goal is reached and we encourage you to make sure it does by heeding the points above.
 - Adapt a more explicit intention to coordinate with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care for the provision of supports and rent supplements for the Housing Now Initiative.
 - 5. Adopt a more structured collaboration with TAEH on how Housing Now will roll out for non-profit and private sector with a shared goal.**
 - We are here to work with you on the Housing Now Initiative. Please reach out to us and feel free to direct City staff to the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness in achieving the one-third targeting plan, including in site and program design as well as funding.

Conclusion

All of these recommendations are in-line with our ZERO TO plan to end chronic homelessness in Toronto. A way of defining this is that we will come to a place where the number of people becoming homeless every month will be equal to, or less than, the number of people experiencing homelessness securing good, sustainable housing again. We look forward to working with all of you on implementing the Housing Now Initiative and maximizing it in the months and years to come.

For more information:

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