

November 14th, 2019.

Subject: Expropriation of 214-230 Sherbourne St.

To Mayor John Tory and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee:

We are concerned agencies, advocates and community groups across the City of Toronto. As you are well aware, the city is in the midst of a housing and shelter crisis. In the downtown east, this crisis is further exacerbated by an alarming intensification of gentrification, a process displacing community members from the neighbourhood through the loss of affordable housing in the area, the closure of rooming houses, an overall lack of subsidized and supportive housing and ever inadequate social assistance and ODSP rates.

Properties at the southwest corner of Dundas and Sherbourne, including 214-230 Sherbourne Street, were briefly put up for sale for potential condo development last year. The corner of Dundas and Sherbourne is an important part of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, at present, homeless people sleep on mats in the All Saints Church at the corner as they cannot access shelter or housing on a nightly basis and many others are forced to stay outdoors or in unsafe conditions. Shelters are at nearly 100% capacity across all sectors, and wait times for rent geared to income housing exceed ten years with nearly 100,000 households presently on the waitlist.

Given the homelessness crisis across the city and the rapid pace of gentrification in the downtown east, we are asking the City to take action around the property at 214-230 Sherbourne Street. In March of 2018, a motion that directed City staff to look into purchasing or expropriating this plot of land was passed. At the Affordable Housing Committee meeting in June of 2018, a recommendation for the development of a framework for the acquisition of property across the City was passed. Now, on December 10th, this framework will be presented at the Housing and Planning Committee meeting. This framework must include immediate action on the acquisition of 214-230 Sherbourne, be it through purchase or expropriation.

In the face of the severity and depth of homelessness in this community, expropriation of this site is a necessary response to ensure the development of truly affordable, subsidized and supportive housing units in the community that will never be possible in private development.

Expropriation has been utilized by the City to secure properties on several occasions, including most recently to purchase properties on George Street, and to buy the building that houses the City-run Birkdale Residence for women. The current crisis of homelessness requires the consideration of measures such as expropriation if needed in order to ensure that community members have access to safe housing. The situation is dire and immediate action is needed desperately.

We urge you to take action on December 10th to begin the acquisition of 214-230 Sherbourne for rent geared to income housing.

Sincerely,

The undersigned:

1. Regent Park Community Health Centre
2. Street Health
3. Shelter and Housing Justice Network
4. Sherbourne Health
5. Health Providers Against Poverty
6. Regeneration Community Services
7. CSI Regent Park
8. S.E.A.S Centre
9. Inner City Family Health Team
10. St. Jude Community Homes
11. South Riverdale Community Health Centre
12. St. Stephen's Community House
13. Neighbourhood Legal Services
14. Mainstay Housing
15. YWCA Toronto
16. CRC|Regent Park Community Food Centre
17. The Neighbourhood Group
18. Toronto Drop In Network
19. Sanctuary
20. Restorative Justice Housing Ontario
21. Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services
22. Loft Community Services
23. Japanese Canadians for Social Justice (JCSJ)
24. All Saints Church Community Centre
25. Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
26. Fife House Foundation Inc.