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**Registered Charity Number**

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**January 23, 2012**

**To: Mayor Rob Ford and City Councillors on Executive Committee**

At the City Executive Committee on January 24<sup>th</sup>, you are being asked to give Toronto Community Housing permission to sell over 700 houses. Two of these houses, 53 Grant Street and 50 Barrington Avenue, are operated by our charity, Seeds of Hope Foundation.

Founded in 2002, Seeds of Hope operates 6 housing projects and two resource centres to support people facing mental health challenges and/or recovering from addiction. We have been able to reduce the relapse rate by over 50% through our supportive community housing model, and to date we have not received any operating funding from the City.

Before making the decision to sell our houses, I would like you to consider the following:

- The two TCHC houses we currently operate are exactly the type of supportive environment that is needed for individuals who have experienced trauma and who need to feel a sense of safety and belonging.
- We provide support to residents at no cost to TCHC by partnering with caring community services such as St John's Mission and Margaret Frazer House. TCHC officials have publicly stated that they do not have the capacity to provide support services to vulnerable people, and it is not their mandate to do so.
- Non-profit housing groups bring significant volunteer resources to supporting vulnerable people, and these caring models are much lower in cost than high staffing models that support individuals in high rise buildings.

We understand that TCHC feels they are losing money on the houses they operate. If this is the case, Seeds of Hope would be prepared to buy the houses at a price that reflects the value of our contribution to the community, and take on the entire cost of operating them, including making any necessary capital repairs. We did a successful project under the Province's "Capital Grants Program" that has been operating for 15 years. That house has required no on-going government operating support.

The alternative would be for TCHC to re-house the ten individuals now living in these houses in other apartments. If the residents were relocated to ten bachelor or one-bedroom apartments, these residents would need a subsidy of about \$500/month each, or a total of \$5,000 per month. This does not include the costs of providing support to each individual.

Creating new housing would be even more costly. For example, 53 Grant might sell for \$600,000. But we estimate it would cost \$150,000 per unit, or \$750,000, to create new apartments for the five people who live at this address and would be displaced by the sale.

We understand that Seeds of Hope is not the only organization affected by TCHC's proposed sale of its stand-alone houses. St. Vincent DePaul, Regeneration House, and many other community organizations provide valuable support services to tenants in houses that will be sold. Re-locating these tenants in high-rise bachelors will isolate them from the housemates and volunteers that provide a real community.

The social costs of closing houses supporting people with mental health challenges will mean higher ambulance costs and increased hospitalization and policing costs. It makes no economic sense to disrupt these caring communities.

With the proposed sell-off, we will also lose the "mix" in mixed-income neighbourhoods. We have all seen the maps of Toronto's "Three Cities," with high income people at the centre, and poor people relegated to the inner suburbs. It's the "Paris problem" that the Toronto Board of Trade has warned us about in its report "*Framework for a Better City*", page 17, and TCHC's proposed sell-off makes it worse.

We urge you to withhold your plans to sell these houses until we have the opportunity to see if there are other options that would allow non-profit organizations to lease or buy these TCHC houses and take on the costs of operating them.

Sincerely,



David Walsh  
Founder  
Seeds of Hope Foundation