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Date: October 23, 2013

To: Affordable Housing Committee

From: Councillor Ana Bailão

**Re: Housing Initiative for Women Who Are Victims
of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking**

Dear Committee Members:

Over the past few months I have heard from members of the community about the pressing need to create housing for young women who are victims of sexual exploitation, a component of human trafficking. They tell me that women wanting to escape sexual exploitation require housing and supports for successful recovery.

At the same time, new research has found that Toronto is one of the principle destinations for women being trafficked and forced into sex work. Women in dire circumstances are trafficked and forced into prostitution. In Toronto, almost one in four young women on the street reported trading sex for food.

Youth are especially vulnerable. Data show that on any given night there are approximately 2,000 homeless youth in Toronto vulnerable to being trafficked. Other studies show that as many as 30 per cent of Canadian street youth are manipulated into some form of selling sex.

The City in partnership with others must do all that we can to stop human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of vulnerable young women.

In February 2013, City Council adopted the report, *EX28.2 Human Trafficking* that recommended working with partners to reduce the impact of human trafficking, identifying resources required to stop it and documenting best practices for establishing housing and supports for victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Executive Committee is expected to consider a staff follow-up report in December on detailed policies and protocols regarding legal assistance, crisis intervention, affordable housing, medical services and skills development for victims of trafficking. In addition, the report will outline the City's role in identifying and implementing best practices for policing, reducing and eradicating human trafficking and establishing housing for its victims.

As Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee and in light of Council's support for action, I believe there is an opportunity to further advance the City's efforts by working with community partners to develop a housing initiative that would help young women escape sexual exploitation and human trafficking and build healthy and empowered lives.

The initiative would actively assist in implementing the City's 10-year housing and homelessness plan, *Housing Opportunities Toronto, An Affordable Housing Action Plan* that recognizes the need to create housing opportunities for vulnerable women and youth and work with partners to secure affordable housing and necessary supports.

The initiative would also draw on best practices from Vancouver, New York and North Carolina that are addressing human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of young women by providing housing and support services. I will be circulating for your review the report, *Housing for Youth Victims of Human Trafficking*, which provides background to the issue.

In light of the above, I am recommending that:

1. The Affordable Housing Committee direct the Director, Affordable Housing Office, and Executive Director, Social Development Finance and Administration, to work with the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, and the President and Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Community Housing, to investigate creating a housing opportunity pilot initiative for five to 10 young women who are victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
2. The Affordable Housing Committee direct that staff report back no later than April 2014 on:
 - a. Potential community partners
 - b. Potential location
 - c. Potential source of available City capital funding such as the Mayor's Homelessness Reserve Fund
 - d. Stakeholder consultation.

I look forward to working with you to develop a plan that addresses this important issue.

Sincerely,

Councillor Ana Bailão