



*Because children  
depend on all of us*



July 11, 2016

Mayor John Tory & Councilors  
100 Queen Street West.  
Toronto, On  
M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory,

On behalf of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAS of Toronto), we appreciate the opportunity to add the voice of child welfare to the City report on **Tenants First: A way forward for Toronto Community Housing and Social Housing in Toronto.**

The CAS of Toronto has a mandate to protect children under the age of 16, and up to the age of 21 for youth who are Crown wards. In addition, our mission includes a commitment to the prevention of child abuse and neglect by strengthening and supporting families and communities. On a daily basis, CAS of Toronto's front line staff visit families across the city and have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by vulnerable children, youth and their families.

Annually, the CAS of Toronto provides services to approximately **21,000 children and 2,284** families. For every child served in child welfare care, we serve 11 children living in the community with their families. The families we work with represent the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of our City and 51% of our clients are led by single parents who are the most at risk for poverty.

Many families we work with are either on social assistance or would be considered working poor relying on inadequate wages and insecure employment. These families also benefit from the affordable housing system which includes social housing, rent-g geared to income, market rent and a varied range of housing types to meet their housing needs. We acknowledge that communities and neighborhoods interact and flourish best when they are diverse in incomes and housing types. Particularly, communities are stronger when residents and tenants have a solid and meaningful role in determining and shaping where they live and call "home".

The City staff report on **Tenants First: A Way Forward for Toronto Community Housing and Social Housing** reflects a strategy for a change in the social housing sector in general, and

Toronto Community Housing (TCH) in particular. It consists of a number of recommendations that address the transformative ideas of the Mayor's Task Force.

The CAS of Toronto is encouraged by the City's response to the crisis in Toronto Community Housing, and finds the recommendations, such as "better building and more of them" encouraging and reflective of the tenants' needs. Many TCHC tenant homes have long been in disrepair and as the City staff report recommends an estimated \$2.6 billion for capital repair. The CAS of Toronto would like to see this recommendation adopted and expedited in its implementation.

Other encouraging and positive directions include, the "decentralize and strengthen partnership" recommendation. This direction is very helpful as it will include tenants in the decision making process and will further lead to increased tenant involvement and engagement.

However, there are recommendations that may pose risks to tenants' stability and the TCHC stock. The City recommendation that 5,000 TCH units be moved to a new community based non-profit organization could result in the loss of public accountability for these homes as Toronto City Council would no longer have responsibility for oversight. The recommendation also provides no rationale as to why moving tenant homes under the management of a new non-profit provider will automatically be beneficial to tenants. A change in management does not in and of itself guarantee a good change for tenants. It is essential that all tenant homes, whether managed by TCH or another entity are equitably funded to ensure good quality housing for tenants regardless of the housing provider.

The report recommends the use of portable housing allowances. The evidence suggests that portable housing allowances can work well for some tenants, particularly with the right supports in place, and be quite harmful for others particularly highly vulnerable tenants with little support. Highly vulnerable tenants without support can face serious difficulties navigating the rental market and end up in exploitative housing arrangements that put their housing at risk. There are costs to ensure proper oversight of any portable housing allowance program. These are factors that should be carefully weighed to decide on the appropriate use of portable housing allowances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Rivard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "R".

David Rivard  
Chief Executive Officer