

EX16.11.6

Deputation from Matthew House Toronto in response to EX 16.11

Re: "Tenants First" report presented by the Deputy City Manager Cluster A, (June 14, 2016)

Dear Executive Council Representatives,

Ours is a good news story: both for the City and Toronto Community Housing (TCH).

My name is Anne Woolger and I am the Founding Director of Matthew House Refugee Reception Services, a privately funded non-profit charity that welcomes, shelters and assists newly arrived refugee claimants. The main home in which we assist our guests is a large single family house which we rent from TCH (part of their "scattered homes" portfolio). Since opening our doors in 1998, we have welcomed and assisted over 1,400 refugee claimants from 94 different nations. Those who come to Matthew House have no sponsors and are essentially homeless upon arrival in the city and would have otherwise had to stay at city-funded homeless shelters.

By providing 12 shelter beds for homeless refugees per evening for the the past 18 years, Matthew House has essentially allowed the City to avoid spending nearly \$6 million in homeless shelter payments! ¹ We have also provided a "caring community" in which our refugee guests have felt a deep sense of belonging enabling them to integrate very successfully into life in our city.

Not only has Matthew House saved the City of Toronto millions of dollars in homeless shelter fees over the past 18 years, we have also *payed* TCH accumulated rent of approximately \$350,000 (to house the City's homeless) and have invested a further \$80,000 in renovation and other improvements to the property. This investment has significantly improved the value of the property, further saving TCH necessary leasehold improvement costs.

In light of the above, Matthew House has, for a number of years been discussing with TCH management the prospect of a transfer of ownership to our non-profit charity. We have felt that it would be in the City and its taxpayers' best interests to convey the 981 Dundas Street West property to Matthew House so that we can continue to deliver a much needed service to homeless refugee claimants while engaging in improvements to the home and saving on rental fees. We are anxious to do more significant upgrades and therefore full ownership of the home is desired.

We therefore appreciate the recommendation of the "Tenants First" report which recommends the transfer of some homes to non-profits such as Matthew House. From a business perspective, in our particular case, we believe that the numbers augur strongly in favour of such an action. **We therefore respectfully request that in cases like ours where a successful model is already in existence and working well, that the transfer be expedited so that we can move forward with our desired improvements as soon as possible and continue to provide much needed welcome and support to newly arriving refugees in our city.**

On behalf of the board of directors, the hundreds of volunteers that have provided us financial and in-kind support and our dynamic and grateful refugee guests who have added to the current and future vibrancy of our City, we thank you kindly for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted by:

Anne Woolger, Founding Director, Matthew House Refugee Reception Services, Toronto

(www.matthewhouse.ca) June 28, 2016.

¹ 2015 City of Toronto per diem shelter rate: \$75.20 x 12 beds = \$902 per day. Annual cost: \$902 per day x 365 days per year = \$329,230. Over the 18-year Matthew House lifetime: \$329,230. X 18 years = \$5,926,140.