

December 1, 2017

His Worship Mayor John Tory and Members of Council
City Clerk's Office
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West, 13th Floor
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Council Recommendations for New Supports and Housing for Survivors of Human Trafficking

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of Council,

On behalf of Covenant House and the at-risk, homeless and trafficked youth we serve, thank you to you, Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, and City Council for your commitment to our work.

With continued investment from the City, we will be able to expand our services to better meet the needs of the vulnerable people who turn to us for support. We are extremely encouraged by the recommendations from the City of Toronto for further support through the new Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports Fund and the Investment in Affordable Housing Program for support services, capital fund and rent supplements, to allow us to further expand housing options and programming for this very vulnerable population.

Covenant House has been helping victims of trafficking for 35 years – we have seen our caseload increase 300 percent in recent years. We have taken the lead to launch an Urban Response Model. The model focusses on three pillars: Prevention and Early Intervention, Direct Services to Victims, Learning and Transfer of Knowledge. The community has embraced this important work and our fundraising campaign garnered \$10.3 million in commitments to support the model over five years.

The model provides comprehensive, trauma-informed, client-centred, and community-coordinated programming and services for victims of sex trafficking. This included the opening of a transitional house for up to seven young women in September 2016. This is the result of a successful partnership with Toronto Community Housing and the City of Toronto.

In addition to transitional housing, our model provides a range of services focusing on the stages of recovery from crisis intervention to independent living. As part of our response model, we have established a 24-hour Emergency Response protocol which included the opening of two designated emergency beds for victims within our existing shelter. The opening of these beds was made possible with the support of the City of Toronto. There are no other emergency beds of this kind in the City. We are working with community partners including Toronto Police Services and Victim Services.



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Charitable Registration Number 10699 0195 RR0001



The beds are full most nights and we have identified a need for more emergency housing and supports for women and girls fleeing sex trafficking, ideally separate from our emergency shelter. The opening of a safe house would provide a place where women and girls can seek refuge from their trafficker and access basic necessities such as food, clothing and health related-support services and counselling.

The safe house will serve the needs of any girl or woman fleeing their trafficker and in need of a safe place to stay, recover from trauma and find pathways to recovery. It will be low-barrier entry and offer high security. It will serve as a launching pad for system navigation, including access to City and community-based support services and transition to other more permanent, affordable housing.

We look forward to continuing to work with City Council to together combat this terrible crime in our City and safeguard victims.

Sincere thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Rivers".

Bruce Rivers
Executive Director

Cc: **Office of the Mayor**