Dear Mayor Tory and Members of the Executive Committee:

Re: RE: EX27.14 – Creating 600 Affordable Rental Homes at the WDL and 27 Grosvenor/26 Grenville Sites

The West Don Lands Committee has already appeared before the Affordable Housing Committee in support of the staff recommendation to make City of Toronto Open Door Program financial incentives available to support this initiative. We are writing to urge Executive Committee to approve the recommendations coming from that Committee.

Ensuring that the new West Don Lands community includes a significant percentage of affordable rental housing has been a high priority for the members of the West Don Lands Committee over the 20 years that we have been advocating for positive revitalization of this precinct.

We are very pleased that the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto have been able to develop the strategy under consideration to complete the West Don Lands precinct by adding up to 390 units of affordable rental housing. It is significant that this initiative will provide a range of affordability that goes beyond what has typically been available in recent affordable rental projects. It is also significant that there will be a requirement to provide a minimum percentage of larger units and to select tenants for the affordable units from the City of Toronto referral program or from not-for-profits where they are involved. Finally, we are very happy to see that an affordability period of at least 49 years will be required for the West Don Lands units.

We very much support the direction coming from the Affordable Housing Committee that the non-profit and co-operative sector continue to be engaged to encourage their participation in the current provincial lands program or from not-for-profits where they are involved. In our view, it is important to ensure that the specialized expertise of the non-profit and cooperative sector be incorporated into the design of this type of initiative.

We would like to thank the Affordable Housing Office, the Waterfront Secretariat, Waterfront Toronto, City Planners and the City Managers for their work with the Province over many months to bring forward this initiative. We appreciate that the City staff have ensured that the West Don Lands Committee has been brought into discussions with the Province as the process has unfolded.

It is hoped that a similar approach to leveraging the value of surplus public lands can be used across the city to address the critical need for long term affordable housing.

Yours truly,

Cynthia Wilkey
John Wilson

Co-Chairs, West Don Lands Committee