



Baba Yaga Place

A Place. A Space. A Community

[www.BabaYagaPlace.ca](http://www.BabaYagaPlace.ca)

Affordable Housing Committee

Toronto City Hall

March 2, 2018

Re: Agenda item 6

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. As Councillor Fletcher noted at your Sept 2017 meeting, "While rent increases in some buildings have been 3% per year, the income for these seniors is fixed. Many of these seniors are women with lower incomes than men in their retirement. With a growing senior population, stable residency is very important." Clearly, affordable housing is essential for our growing senior population; however we must improve upon existing options and models.

Baba Yaga Place is a feminist, affordable, urban housing model primarily for senior women, where we will live independently, make our own decisions, help each other and be part of a community. It will be an environmentally responsible community; committed to environmental sustainability and environmental justice.

The BYP concept is innovative and cost effective. **Innovative**, because it improves the quality of life which, in turn, reduces the illnesses that result from loneliness and isolation; **cost effective**, because research shows that it is economically more efficient for seniors to live in our own residences within a supportive community, ensuring that visits to the ER are less often necessary. Baba Yaga Place will provide a better way of aging in place.

Toronto's Baba Yaga Place will be a community built on principles of mutual support, engagement with the world at large, and feminism. With self-contained apartments and common spaces for shared meals, socializing and meetings, seniors will be able to age in place, without the isolation. Reduced isolation will allow members to provide support to each other to carry out day-to-day tasks. It will also allow for continued community engagement which is essential for healthy aging and enhances a sense of purpose. BYP will be self-governed, with members participating in planning and decision making.

***As we all know, affordable rental space for seniors is sorely lacking in Toronto. Baba Yaga Place is an initiative that will address many issues for seniors, especially senior women.*** Statistics pointing further to the housing needs for Toronto's seniors include:

- The frontline of the baby boom demographic bulge, affecting many regions, reached 65 years in 2011.
- In Canada, seniors (65+) make up a record nearly 14% of the total population. Within the next 20 years the proportion of seniors is expected to nearly double to 27%.
- The majority of seniors in Canada (83%) live in large urban centres.
- In Ontario, older seniors (75+) are expected to increase from less than 1 million to 2.2 million by 2036.
- Those 90 years and over will more than triple in number, from 75,000 to 261,000, during the same period.
- In Toronto and the GTA, the proportion of seniors will rise from 12% to 20.4% by 2036.
- Among seniors, the groups most at risk are **women**, unattached seniors and **immigrant women**. These groups are most likely to suffer from isolation, lower income and poor health.

Healthcare delivery systems for seniors either overlap or are fragmented.

- There is a major disconnect between healthcare and other services such as social services, transportation, and preventive health.
- This contributes to the number of seniors who move into retirement homes or long-term care facilities prematurely.
- Between 15 and 25% of seniors in such facilities have symptoms of major depression.

Experience with the seemingly desirable 'aging in place' concept highlights significant shortcomings, such as:

- Reliance on overstressed informal (unpaid) caregivers (especially adult children and other family members)
- Underfunded public support of professional (often poorly paid) caregivers
- Increased risks of social isolation and elder abuse

Baba Yaga Place members look forward to continued conversations with Toronto's Affordable Housing Committee and our city's leaders. Several city councillors have already endorsed this initiative. With partnerships, we can create sustainable, affordable housing for seniors, and in particular, senior women.