

DEPUTATION

CD26.5.4

To: **Community Development and Recreation Committee, Toronto City Council**

DATE: **Wednesday, February 28, 2018**

RE: **Investing in housing and long-term approaches to end homelessness**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you again today on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH).

As you are aware, the TAEH is focussed on what it will take to end homelessness in Toronto.

This does not mean that we don't understand the critical need for a responsive, healthy, nimble and welcoming emergency shelter system to meet the immediate needs of people who are unsheltered on any given night.

What it does mean, however, is that we insist that it be a modern, effective shelter system and that it be only one part of a robust housing delivery system that puts it to use towards ending homelessness, and is not simply a tool for managing homelessness.

We envision the same kind of improved shelter system as one part of a housing delivery system as is outlined in the report before us today for item CD26.5. And we are here today to say so.

We also support the medium and long term initiatives laid on in this report, initiatives that speak to homelessness prevention and to a continuum of housing development and support services that we so desperately need to make progress – together – to end homelessness.

It is, as well, encouraging to see increased collaboration and commitment to coordination with the LHINs on client-focussed service delivery, and to see direct commitments for creating a mature data and information system to better understand and take action on improving client outcomes and ending homelessness.

Specific examples of how the plans and recommendations in this report are going in the right direction are:

- A full set of shelter, respite centre service standards
- Health services model in shelters, working with LHINs
- Pilots to increase access of eligible shelter clients with complex health needs to long term care beds
- Preparations for Winter 2018/2019
- Housing focussed case management using a client-centred and strengths based approach in new shelter model
- Development of new Housing Opportunities Toronto (HOT) and SSHA Housing Stability Plan focussed on prevention and permanent housing solutions

- Eviction prevention measures such as EPIC (Eviction Prevention in the Community) and Tenant Relocation Support Services (TRSS)
- Increased coordination and prioritization of people with mental health and addiction challenges through the Homes For Good program. A component of this is the Rapid Housing Project that the TAEH is pleased to be part of.
- Tenants First measure with TCHC that have already secured over 200 units for people exiting shelters.
- New deeply affordable housing options led by Toronto's Affordable Housing Office
- City advocacy on the issue of Inclusionary Zoning with the province

In particular, the TAEH wants to emphasize the inclusion and prioritization of systems planning and coordination in the actions laid out in the report today:

- Improving data:
 - We are aware of the pilot to integrate Streets to Homes outreach services into SMIS and cannot state enough how important this is. We look forward to continue to support its success in 2018.
 - Developing indicators of client flow through the shelter system
 - The upcoming Street Needs Assessment
 - Exploring advantages of HIFIS data to learn more about Toronto
- Intergovernmental Collaboration:
 - Federal and Provincial engagement in winter respite sites
 - Rapid Housing Project
 - Bridges to Housing program
 - Action group of City and provincial officials, with meeting of GTA and Hamilton Area Service Managers
 - Refugee Capacity Plan
- City strategic planning:
 - The interdivisional working group of City staff to shepherd the new Housing Opportunities Toronto (HOT) Action Plan 2020-2030
 - SSHA's Housing Stability Service Plan 2020 – 2024
 - Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum

CONCLUSION

We commend this Committee, all of Council and the staff in Cluster A, as well as the Affordable Housing Office, for staying focused and committed to a multi-pronged approach that invests in housing options, homelessness prevention as well as shelters in addressing homelessness.

The provincial and federal governments' actions and cooperation are also appreciated.

We urge you to support the recommendations in this report and move them forward. In addition to its contents we also ask you to include two additional actions:

1. Add to the overall approach strategies of shelter diversion to quickly re-house people arriving at shelters that our eviction or other prevention programs couldn't help; and

2. Take the opportunity of the National Housing Strategy by committing a designated portion of resources to house chronically homeless people and that creates a faster, better coordinated housing delivery system in Toronto.

The TAEH and our partners will continue to be active with other orders of government as well, as we were recently in our support of Toronto's call for better inclusionary zoning regulations.

I will close by sharing this quote with you:

“Emergency responses like shelters and respite services are important to support people when they are in immediate crisis. However, the real solution to homelessness is to continue to build capacity in our prevention and housing stability services in order to move towards reducing and ending homelessness in the longer term.”

Who said this? Your own staff in this report – reflecting, no doubt, the leadership of this Committee during the productive, if hard, conversations of the last months. Congratulations and the TAEH looks forward to continuing to work together with all parts of the City in ending homelessness.

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