



December 16, 2019

Mayor Tory and members of City Council
C/O Marilyn Toft
City Council Secretary
12th floor, West Tower, City Hall
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Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
By email: councilmeeting@toronto.ca; marilyn.toft@toronto.ca

Dear Mayor Tory, Councillor Bailão, Chair of the Planning and Housing Committee, and Council colleagues:

Re: Agenda Item PH11.5 HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan

I am writing to raise a concern with the Staff Report to Council on the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan. The Action Plan proposes thoughtful solutions to address the housing challenges facing recent immigrants, seniors, and women. However, the availability and affordability challenges faced by students are strikingly absent.

Housing is a significant issue for all students living in the city. The Student Dwell Initiative, which studies how the Toronto housing crisis is affecting students, noted 47.5% of students said that housing costs were a barrier to the quantity and quality of food they consumed.

At the University of Toronto, we accept that meeting the needs of students is a shared responsibility. Our commitment to meeting this growing challenge is reflected in our long-term capital plan that includes developing over 200,000 gross square metres dedicated to new student, staff, and faculty housing.

Currently, the University is adding capacity at both the St. George Campus and the Scarborough Campus through the Spadina/ Sussex Student Residence (over 500 new beds) and the UTSC Ellesmere Road Student Residence (~ 750 new beds). Additionally, there are several other expansions in the planning phase including expanded capacity at Trinity College (350 beds) and Harbord Residence (~200 beds).

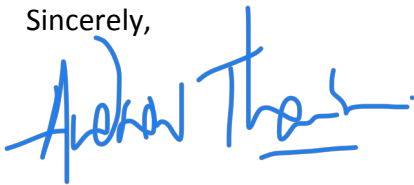
Yet, fulfilling the University's role has not been without challenges in the City's planning and development process. When the Spadina/Sussex residence finally opens in 2022, the development will have taken 10 years, and will have proceeded only as a result of intervention by the LPAT. Delays like this put pressure on the surrounding community to absorb the demand for affordable housing, or leave students competing for limited and often sub-standard space in the interim.

We were encouraged to see the City conduct an end-to-end review of the development process. We are hopeful that productive changes will be made to ensure a smoother process, especially when development is aligned with the City's stated goals and conducted by a trusted partner such as a university. However, we believe the City – and this Council – need to demonstrate that it shares an understanding of the importance of expediting student residence developments, and the challenges students face.

As currently drafted, student voices and their needs are absent from the Staff Report. We are therefore requesting Council to amend the recommendations and add the following:

1. That the work of the Student Dwell initiative, found here: <https://studentdwellto.ca/About-Main>, be incorporated in the next annual update to City Council on the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan;
2. That the City, in the annual update on the end-to-end review of the development process, report back to council with options to provide universities and other trusted partners with clear pathways especially to expedite development; and
3. That there be further engagement of postsecondary institutions and students with respect to the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan to ensure student housing needs are formally addressed in the next steps of the Action Plan.

Sincerely,



Andrew Thomson
Chief of Government Relations