



To: Executive Committee, Toronto City Council

From: Jean Stevenson, ED, Madison Community Service and Steering Committee
Member of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness

Date: Wednesday, January 23, 2019

Re: Housing Now Initiative

Good Morning. My name is Jean Stevenson and I am here on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness. I am on the TAEH Steering Committee and I am the Executive Director of Madison Community Services. Madison is a community-based non-profit agency which serves individuals with mental health and addictions challenges. Our services include supportive housing with wrap around case management supports. Our clients all live below the poverty line – receiving Ontario Disability shelter allowances of \$489/month for housing. Most of our clients were homeless or at risk of homelessness before coming to Madison. Some still are – due to the crisis level shortage of affordable rental housing in Toronto - as well as the lack of rent supplement/housing allowance funds which are required to top up the \$489 ODSP shelter allowance for our clients.

My colleagues from the TAEH and others here have spoken in support of the Housing Now Initiative with specific recommendations for making it stronger and more focussed on supporting/partnering with the non-profit housing and the mental health and addictions supportive housing sectors to so that this initiative and future housing policy and other initiatives are working to ending homelessness.

What I would like to add to what has been said is to remind the Executive Committee that what TAEH and other disputants are recommending today is a best practice in other countries, other parts of Canada and had been in Toronto in the mid-70s, 80s and 90s.

For example here in Canada – we have a shining example of one best practice in addressing homeless recently carried out by the City of Vancouver.

- Since September 2017, the City of Vancouver has created over 400 self-contained apartments for people who are on the street or shelters with another 202 under construction.
- These self-contained homes were created in just 5 months
- Some key elements for making this possible was:
 - They are modular housing which can be manufactured quickly and locally – then on-site assembly can be completed within 90 days
 - The homes are built on city –owned sites
 - The city zoned the sites for residential use and site plan permit approvals have been streamlined
 - Entered into long term agreements with non-profit organizations to provide the supports

- The most important element is that this **initiative had commitment straight from the top.**
- In Vancouver both the Mayor and the City Manager drove the agenda, freeing up city owned land, assigning planning staff to the modular housing file, and to streamline the process
- As one City of Vancouver staff member said, “We sat down with the Planning Division and re-engineered the process. How do we turn a specific process that normally takes a month into a week and turn a week into a day.”

This information and more was gathered by a long-time advocate of affordable non-profit housing – Joy Connelly - and I’ve included the link to her article on this best practice in her website – Opening the Window – (below)in my written deputation for more details.

<https://openingthewindow.com/2019/01/10/creating-new-homes-in-just-five-months/>

This is just one exciting example of how deeply affordable housing can be created – a best practice – through political will and with all relevant parties – city

politicians and divisions; provincial and federal funders, non-profit housing, MH&A supportive housing agencies sharing the same goals and working together to get it done.

I'd also like to remind the Executive Committee that political will and best practices existed in Toronto at many times in its history but most recently in the 70s, 80s & 90s. During those years tens of thousands of municipal and private non-profit housing was created. In the year of 1965 -1995 an average of 2,300 units/year of social housing was built in Toronto. The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood was an prime example of political will and a commitment to ensuring that there would be healthy mix of deeply affordable housing in the planning. This initiative was led straight from the top by Mayor Crombie and the Chief Planner at the time – Michael Dennis. Non-profit agencies were members of the planning committee. And 57% of the housing in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood was allocated to non-profit –municipal and community-based-housing, non-profit co-op housing which are still providing deeply affordable housing today and in perpetuity.

Those of us in the non-profit housing and the mental health and addictions supportive housing as well as the ending homelessness and poverty sectors view the Housing Now Initiative proposal as the beginning of many bold initiatives by the City of Toronto to come- especially if the recommendations made by TAEH and others (e.g. allocating one-third of the 11 surplus sites for deeply affordable and supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness) that will bring the it closer to the Mayor's goal of creating over 3,000/year new affordable rental units over the next 12 years and the City Councils goal of creating 18,000 units of supportive housing over the next 10 years.

We are seeing a resurgence of political will in Toronto to create affordable and deeply affordable rental housing faster and a recognition that all relevant parties must share the same goal of ending homelessness.

We ask you all on the Executive Committee/City Council to please keep building on this resurgence and stay on this course of going back to Toronto's history of political will to follow best practices in creating deeply affordable non-profit housing and non-profit supportive housing.