



Councillor Stephen Holyday, Chair, Special Committee on Governance
100 Queen Street West, Suite B26
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
councillor_holyday@toronto.ca

February 20, 2019

RE: Item GV.1.2 - Public Input on City Council's Governance System for 26 Members

Dear Chair and members of the Special Committee on Governance,

I write today to reiterate the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness' (TAEH) support for one single and coordinated place for discussions and decision-making regarding the City's actions along the whole continuum of homelessness and housing.

Our deputation in favour of the proposed Standing Committee on Housing as before Executive Committee last June is included below for your reference.

We appreciate your Committee's invitation for public input at the February 21, 2019 meeting "on how the reduction in the size of Council affects the way the City is governed and the way people interact with their City government," including "suggestions for changes to the City's governance structure, including modernizing governance." This is a transparent act of leadership that respects the people of Toronto.

In response, the TAEH strongly encourages this Committee to consider the following key points:

- Toronto's new City Council and Mayor have been explicit that housing and homelessness are priority issues. The unprecedented release of City lands through the Housing Now Initiative and the recent calls for increased action on supportive housing are only two examples.
- Housing, homelessness and affordability issues are increasingly more complex, and more Torontonians experience homelessness or precarious housing.
- The Mayor and many of the current Councillors, including those who supported a new Standing Committee on Housing in June, understand that a continuum of services - from street outreach and shelter responses to affordable housing and planning for quality of life in our neighbourhoods – need to be addressed as a whole to better meet the housing needs across the city.
- City Council, therefore, must have an integrated approach to governing the necessary inter-sector and inter-divisional discussions to learn, share evidence, debate and make decisions with an eye to both short and long term strategic action(s).

- Ultimately, the success of Toronto City Council to effectively govern and address the complexity and continuum of issues, resources and interests that are part of a modern housing strategy will be measured by the outcomes of people experiencing homelessness in our city.
- City Council has been reduced almost by half, making strategically designed governance decisions to ensure success in priority areas even more important.

In conclusion, the TAEH expects coordinated discussion, planning and action regardless of the final governance and administrative structure.

Both of the Committees most likely implicated by these recommendations and their Chairs, Deputy Mayors Bailão and Thompson, have shown leadership on housing and homelessness issues and we are confident they can both contribute constructively to ensuring an integrated approach as articulated above.

The TAEH believes in a future without chronic homelessness and it is progress towards this goal that we will hold City Council accountable. As noted many times before, we know we also have a role to play in supporting the City in its success and we will continue to do our part.

Sincerely,

Kira Heineck
Executive Lead

CC: Ana Bailão, Shelly Carroll, Gary Crawford, Gord Perks

APPENDIX

DEPUTATION

To: **Executive Committee, Toronto City Council**
DATE: **Tuesday, June 19, 2018**
RE: **Creation of a Standing Committee on Housing, EX35.1**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). **The TAEH is a collective impact initiative made up of Community Partners focused on what it will take to end homelessness in Toronto.**

We are here today to speak in support of the creation of a Standing Committee on Housing.

As you know, the Alliance strongly believes that housing is the solution to end homelessness. We are encouraged by the recommendations outlined in the report, in particular, the conversion of the Affordable Housing Committee from a special committee to a standing committee responsible for all housing, shelter and accommodation matters. Having one central standing housing committee at City

Hall to look at housing holistically and tackle the issue in a central and coordinated way is much needed and exciting.

A Standing Committee on Housing that has a mandate to monitor and make recommendations on housing and shelter in the city is an excellent step forward and reason to be optimistic. It also demonstrates an understanding that it is one continuum of services from street outreach to affordable housing that is required and shows a commitment to make the housing continuum a priority.

It is imperative that we ensure those affected by homelessness and poverty have immediate access to housing. The current state of homelessness is at a crisis level. We know that Toronto's shelters are near capacity (92 percent – June 19); that 8,635 people are homeless on any given night; that over (6,464 – June 19) individuals and families are in shelters, with over 500 people using respite sites (May 30, 2018).

Looking ahead, we believe that a Standing Committee on Housing will be beneficial in such areas as:

- Redefining what deeply affordable housing means and how to bridge the affordability gap.
- Exploring a range of housing and affordability issues.
- Enhancing the City's interdivisional work that's starting to take shape.
- Including diversion and prevention as part of the overall strategy.
- Addressing the continuum from shelter to housing.
- Developing and enhancing the role of portable housing benefits.

Having a Standing Committee on Housing also provides an opportunity for the Alliance to work together with the committee on reaching our goal of ZERO TO, which is our plan and mission to end chronic homelessness in our city. We acknowledge our role in working with the City to make more affordable housing a reality and look forward to helping set Toronto up for success.

We believe the new Standing Committee will also be instrumental in helping to carry out the initiatives outlined in *Reaching Home*; the Federal Government's redesigned Homelessness Partnering Strategy, announced on June 11. With that in mind, we encourage the City to commit as soon as possible a certain percentage of the increased National Housing Strategy dollars to housing and supports for those currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Conclusion

We want to recognize the good work done by the Community Development and Recreation Committee, The Affordable Housing Committee and Tenant Issues Advisory Council in addressing all matters relating to housing, shelter and accommodation. That said, bringing all the City's housing responsibilities together under one committee along with a proposed new housing secretariat is a step in the right direction and will undoubtedly be more efficient, more strategic for the community and have more impact.

The Alliance greatly favours the effort in creating a new committee focused on championing and overseeing the City's overall housing delivery system; one that sees emergency shelters and supportive housing as integral components along with mainstream affordable housing development. Our deputation has been reviewed by over 30 of the Alliance's Community Partners and Individual Supporters **listed below** and we stand together in advocating support for the motion for a new Standing Committee on Housing.

Thank you.

For more information:

Kira Heineck, Executive Lead

heineck_k@cotainspires.ca

taeh.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association-TO
(Scarborough)
Clara Menard
Cota
Covenant House
Daily Bread Food Bank
Dixon Hall
Fred Victor
Habitat Services
Homes First
Homeless Connect Toronto
Houselink
LOFT Community Services
Kennedy House Youth Services
Madison Community Services
Mainstay Housing

Mark Shapiro
Parkdale Queen West Community Health
Centre
St. Jude Community Homes
St. Stephen's Community House
The 519
The Access Point
The Housing Help Centre (Scarborough)
The John Howard Society of Toronto
The Salvation Army
The Stop Community Food Centre
Toronto Hostels Training Centre
Toronto Shelter Support Network
West Neighbourhood House
Woodgreen Community Services
Working for Change
YMCA
Yonge Street Mission