



To members of the Planning & Housing Committee,

The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) has been one of the most effective organizations for low and moderate income communities to make change in the City of Toronto for over a decade. Since 2004, housing has been the number one priority issue for members, no matter where and how they are living. Without a healthy and affordable home, it is impossible to live.

For this reason we wanted to share our thoughts on the City of Toronto's 10 year housing plan. We support a rights based approach to housing, and we are pleased to see a recognition that a definition of 'affordable' that is based on average market rent is not adequate. We support changing the official definition of affordable to an income based one. ACORN members have been fighting for real affordability, based on a percentage of income, for what feels like forever.

However, we have many concerns with the plan but we also believe in the ability of this committee and the members of council to make some key changes and strengthen the plan.

Our concerns, and suggestions are:

- Clarify the language of the plan and make firm commitments with achievable targets.
- The commitments made in the plan must not rely on the provincial or federal governments. They should work based on city commitments alone. Any funding from other levels of government should supplement the plan, not be the lynchpin of it.
- To make sure the plan is a success and properly executed, the city must commit to creating a housing commissioner.
- ACORN supports public contributions to build affordable housing, however any development which receives public funding should:
 - o Be permanently affordable.
 - o Have rent control as a requirement of receiving public funds. We call for all rent increases to be tied to the annual provincial guideline, and also for vacancy control on all units in developments that receive public funds.
- We also need a strong commitment to tools that will make this plan a reality.

- We need strong inclusionary zoning, with deep affordability. Every condo that is built without inclusionary zoning is a missed opportunity .
- We need a vacant unit tax, to help fund new housing. Housing is a right, not a commodity and empty units should be taxed. Housing should not be an investment that is most profitable when it doesn't house anyone.
- Finally, it is not enough to build affordable housing. Our existing affordable housing stock, where ACORN members live, is at risk due to predatory landlords
 - The plan must commit to a strong RentSafe program that is actually enforced.
 - The city must come up with a 'no displacement' tenant protection policy that addresses tenant buyouts, renovictions, economic evictions and tenants being harassed out of their homes by lack of repairs.

Housing is so important to our communities. Low and moderate income people need to trust in their politicians. This plan is a major opportunity for the city to do something real for the people that are struggling to survive. We hope you take these concerns and suggestions seriously and make a concrete and lasting change that deeply affects people's lives.

On Behalf of Toronto ACORN,

Marva Burnett, President of ACORN Canada