

## DEPUTATION

To: **Economic and Community Development Committee**  
DATE: **Tuesday, January 14, 2020**  
RE: **Update on Community Engagement Processes for Locating New  
Shelters and Related Services (EC11.5)**

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

We are here to express our strong support for the current Community Engagement Processes for shelters and related services, as well as its improvements, as outlined in the report for this item. We are particularly encouraged by the results of the change to Delegated Authority for locating shelter sites and want to be clear that we support Delegated Authority wholeheartedly.

As you are aware, the TAEH is a collective impact initiative made up of Community Partners focussed on what it will take to end homelessness in Toronto. We know that this is housing and housing-focussed types of services that meet the individual needs and circumstances of people experiencing homelessness. As such, we are glad and want to acknowledge, the progress in the general shift in the discussions and actions of the City towards a more housing-focused response to homelessness.

There will always be a need for emergency shelters, even when we reach our shared vision of homelessness being rare, brief and non-recurring. Will we need far fewer of them – and smaller ones - as they are a part of the continuum of our response to homelessness. They must be “housing-delivery” places that keep the flow of people back into permanent housing going.

Shelters must also exist in all neighbourhoods across Toronto, so that as people become homeless they can stay in their home communities. This approach is a proven strategy that both shortens the time people remain homeless and minimizes the effects and impacts of experiencing homelessness. Even more importantly, having a housing-delivery focussed shelter system spread out across the city allows for more successful prevention and diversion activities to keep more people from becoming homeless in the first place.

For all these reasons and more, the current approach to locating shelters and related services, including its consistency with a human rights approach to housing, and its tools and strategies to engage the community so as to make shelter and services a success, is the right one.

This approach is part of Toronto’s new Emergency Shelter Development Process approved by City Council in December 2017. This was a pivotal moment, bolstered with the additional changes approved by Council in March 2019 to the municipal shelter by-law in order to increase the as-of-right zoning permissions for municipal shelters.

This is what changed the past – a past characterized by polarizing, divisive public discussions that stigmatized people experiencing homelessness, delayed decisions and often resulted in the City’s loss of appropriate buildings in Toronto’s uber-competitive real estate market – into the future, where experienced staff with Delegated Authority from Council can choose and secure sites and then work more deeply and constructively with communities to make sure that shelters and services are a success.

And, remember, that success doesn’t just mean a more involved, integrated and supportive community, it also means that more people are getting the help they need, in their home communities, more quickly to prevent, divert or end their homelessness. This is clearly a win-win situation.

## **CONCLUSION**

TAEH and our many partners had front row seats in the past, participated in the deep consultation process that led to the recommendations that Council approved in December 2017 that bring us to where we are now, and can attest to the success of the new approach to date.

We are also encouraged by and applaud SSHA for evaluating the first years of this new approach and then committing to the improvements suggested by what they learned. This will only increase the success of the new shelter model, the community engagement process and efforts to make homelessness in Toronto rare, brief and non-recurring – in all our neighbourhoods.

Thank you.

## **For more information:**

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