



563 Spadina Crescent, Suite 236, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2J7 | Tel: (416) 625-7712 | www.cawsi.com/

December 7th 2020.

To: Toronto City Council - Economic and Community Development Committee

Dear Councillor Michael Thompson,

RE: Change in policy to build 100 % social housing - End encampments

I am writing to ask the economic and community development committee to support the request by residents and many community organizations to develop a new community focused policy to build 100 % social & affordable housing in all future City development projects focused on the provision of housing through Toronto Community Housing or other subsidiaries of the City of Toronto.

At your meeting on December 7th 2020 you heard from over seventy (70) residents and community organizations and anchor institutions from across the city of Toronto demanding the following:

1. An immediate moratorium on forced evictions of encampment residents and temporary shelters from public spaces.
2. Open at least 2,000 new shelter-hotel rooms in the next 4 months. This is the only way people will have a safe alternative to living outside in encampments, given that shelters are currently full. For these sites to be successful and truly safe for people:
 - All sites must have overdose prevention services and support on-site that is provided by experienced harm-reduction staff.
 - Half of the sites must be located in the downtown core, to ensure people aren't disconnected from critical services and their communities.
3. Provide services to people in encampments.
 - Provide \$1 million to community agencies to distribute survival supplies and fire safety equipment to encamped individuals.
 - Ensure people have access to indoor facilities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – including access to winterized bathrooms and showers for encampments adjacent to City sites.

As a volunteer with the Feed to Heal program by the youth group Healing as One, I have personally witnessed the challenges faced by families and our neighbours in crisis in Moss Park and surrounding neighborhoods. I am proud of the community action taken by youth who donated free meals to those in need.

As we have heard from other speakers, the global pandemic has exacerbated the city's pre-existing homelessness crisis and has resulted in over 1,000 people living outside because homeless shelters are full and there isn't a safer place for them to go. To make matters worse, [there are tens of thousands of people in the city who are at imminent risk of eviction and homelessness.](#)

They are facing eviction because they are behind in their rent and can't get caught up. While the City claims that they have provided alternatives to living outside, these alternatives are unsafe as they require people to endure unhealthy living conditions, put people at risk of contracting COVID-19, do not comply with [CDC](#)



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[recommendations](#), and put people at [risk of overdosing](#). People who are living outside in encampments in public parks and other public places are [struggling to survive and are in need of supplies and support](#).

Housing is a human right. The current city policies have failed to address the housing crisis. Industries that benefit from speculation in the housing market are profiteering due to lack of appropriate regulations and policies that govern the building of housing and most importantly the funding of capital projects that secure 100% of social housing.

This committee on June 11th 2019 adopted the [community benefits framework](#)¹ – an important step in allowing residents to engage in the development process to multiply the impact of the investments made.

If the respective committee and council decide to show leadership by ignoring the highly paid lobbyists and requiring that all new housing built in the city be made available to those that require social housing and other affordable housing options in our city. The policy change and investment will have an impact that will help us end encampments are drastically reduce the waiting list where tens of thousands of our neighbours have been waiting for decades.

As a coalition we shall monitor the positions taken by members of council in support of the community demand of 100% social and affordable housing. The positions of members of council will be made public in 2022 municipal elections.

This week, a popular business that has paid lobbyists to ask for your support - [Airbnb](#) is going public (December 9th) and many pundits expect that the Airbnb's IPO will be "hot". It is important to reflect on the actions taken by council that has impacted businesses like Airbnb, whose core business model has been challenged during the pandemic and economic downturn, specifically due to the illegal business practices that has become synonymous with the home-sharing and rental concept that it pioneered more than a decade ago.

The Coalition Against White Supremacy and Islamophobia (CAWSI) is a volunteer lead not-for-profit advocacy organization committed to promoting and advocating for human rights. CAWSI has campaigned locally to find solutions to address the systemic impact of white supremacy by working with over 150 community, student, labour and other human rights organizations that have issued a joint statement against white supremacy and islamophobia. Our coalition will continue to work closely with community members and the relevant stakeholders to support the necessary policy change at the City of Toronto.

We look forward to hearing back from the respective committee and Council on what steps we can take to support marginalized communities experiencing the negative social and economic impacts caused by the lack of investments and ineffective policies that has devastating and lasting generational effects on the lived experiences of many racialized and marginalized families living and working in the City of Toronto.

Yours sincerely,

Walied Khogali
Co-founder, CAWSI

¹ Retrieved from: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-134595.pdf>