

TO: **Planning and Housing Committee**

DATE: Tuesday, November 17, 2020

RE: **Creating the Regulatory and Compliance Framework for Multi-tenant Houses across Toronto (PH18.2)**



Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). As you know, the TAEH is a network of partners reaching across the city, all united in the vision of ending homelessness. We also serve as your non-Indigenous Community Advisory Board, and co-chair the Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum with SSHA.

The Alliance is in favour of the report for Item PH18.2 and its recommendations to Committee. We commend City staff from all the divisions that contributed to its vision of a human rights approach to affordable housing for everyone in Toronto, wherever they want to live; and to its comprehensive plan for developing a new zoning and licensing framework that is harmonized across the whole city.

One of the TAEH's main priorities is the existence of enough deeply affordable housing in Toronto for those on the lowest incomes, including but not limited to people in receipt of social assistance. The report today rightly stresses the critical role of multi-tenant houses in filling this need. And, as the TAEH also strongly endorses, it also stresses that these homes must be safe, of quality, accessible and available wherever people chose to live, not just in parts of pre-amalgamated Toronto where they are currently "allowed," let alone regulated.

Beyond Committee members endorsing the plan outlined in PH18.2 today, the TAEH is eager to participate in consultation on the further details of the zoning and licensing framework, and to assist in these consultations as makes sense going forward. The issues that are of particular interest to our partners and the homeless-serving community include:

- That **a robust and meaningful consultation process takes place**, including appropriate supports to make them accessible to tenants and landlords in both regulated and unregulated multi-tenant houses. The process and tools used in the Housing TO public consultations are a good example of what should be used here again.
- That **the right balance is struck between improving the current situation and minimizing the loss of current rooms that are people's homes**, even in the unlicensed, less quality houses.

In other words, that we do not inadvertently create more homelessness through this work. The report's realization of this risk, and commitments to support tenants as needed, is positive of course. In addition, the discussion of what the right standards for quality and safety are must also take the effects of implementing them on the availability of existing units into account.

- **What the timeline for current owners, operators of multi-tenant houses, including those running personal care homes, to make the changes needed to comply with the new framework will be.**

The TAEH is available to convene those delivering housing with supports (supportive housing) in congregate living settings to develop a mutually-beneficial time line and approach. One tool to explore here is the grandparenting of current houses to the new standards over time.

- What **financial and other supports will be available to assist those wanting to make the renovations or other changes needed to comply with the new framework.** We are encouraged to see that this is recognized in Recommendation #3's direction to staff to include an incentive program in the Implementation Plan.
- The opportunity this work creates for **a collective reimagining of what high quality, multi-tenant homes can be,** including thinking beyond fire, room limits etc. to what other elements create inclusive, supportive homes and communities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the TAEH welcomes and supports this direction on creating the regulatory and compliance framework for multi-tenant Houses across Toronto. We look forward to seeing action quickly – as the report details, we have been talking about improving both the quality and universal access to multi-tenant houses since 2008 – and supported with solid consultation.

And, while the issue before us today is not directly tied to supportive housing, it does play a role in ensuring deeply affordable units to those that can then also engage with supports in these units. At the very least, our collective work on improving multi-tenant houses cannot result in losing precious supportive housing – and, if done well, it can create more good quality supportive housing units.

Thank you,
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