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To the City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee

Good afternoon,

My name is Aris Babikian. I am the Member of the Provincial Parliament for Scarborough-Agincourt, a 32-year resident of Scarborough-Agincourt, and retired Citizenship Judge.

I am here today on behalf of the residents of Scarborough-Agincourt to bring to your attention a grave concern my neighbors and residents have in regards to the new regulatory framework for multi-tenant houses, commonly known as "rooming houses".

Since the tabling of the staff report on June 15, 2021, I have been overwhelmed by the calls, emails, and letters I received regarding this proposal. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to meet the residents and talk to them about their concerns and objections to the new farm work. In addition, a petition has been circulating by the residents to oppose this concept and hundreds of residents in my constituency have signed the petition.

Regarding the proposal, I must say that I wholeheartedly support the residents' anxiety and anger and empathize with their frustrations. This proposal is fraught with so many deficiencies and problems where instead of solving/addressing an issue, it will have the potential to create many indescribable and mind-boggling legislative, enforcement, and social troubles for the residents of the city of Toronto.

The approval of this notion will destroy our family-orientated and traditional neighborhoods. This proposal will create chaos in the city that will drastically affect the safety and security of our peaceful, hardworking, and law-abiding citizens where crime and illegal activities will thrive.

Another major concern regarding these rooming houses will be the increased danger of fire hazard to our neighborhoods and residents. According to the Toronto Star, "10 percent of Toronto fire fatalities in the past decade were in rooming houses." I am confident that if this proposal is approved, the number of fire fatalities will increase substantially.



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Another major disturbing phenomenon will be the congestion in our streets and the illegal parking incidents. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new outbreak will spread like fire due to overcrowding and it will be even more difficult to curb.

As we know, most of our dwellings and infrastructure in Toronto are very old. I do not believe that our current infrastructure can cope with the substantial pressure this initiative would bring.

The enforcement of the current proposal will be another major troubling issue. If it is passed, it will be a nightmare to enforce the regulation. I do not think the city has a sufficient number of by-law officers to enforce the regulation and neither has the resources to hire and train adequate officers to properly enforce the regulations. Another major concern is the qualification of rooming house owners and operators to manage and maintain safe dwellings where the safety of the tenants is not compromised or jeopardized.

I am cognizant that there is an affordable housing crisis in the city. But this proposal is not the answer. The affordable housing problem is the result of accumulated years of inaction by various levels of government and needs serious discussion and permanent solutions: not a short-term Band-Aid solution.

I have spoken to many city councillors and law enforcement officers. They are against the proposal. They raise many concerns with the proposal that it will take more than the five minutes allowance afforded to me to make my deputation.

If this proposal is approved by the Committee and the City Council, you are going to forever ruin the tranquility, peace, and cohesion of our city and turn neighbor against neighbor and family against family. Furthermore, you will stigmatize certain segments of our society and our communities.

I plead with you to reject this proposal.

Aris Babikian, MPP  
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