

Written Deputations from Willowdale Manor Senior Residents at 175 Cummer Avenue

Scribed on June 6, 2023 at Willowdale Manor

I have lived here for 23 years. I am very grateful for this area. I am very satisfied with this building. It's a very good place. Everyone is very peaceful. We are like a small United Nation. Everyone gets along. There are many activities here which bring me a lot of joy. We feel very lucky to be here. But these past few years have been difficult. Vincent Mak, the tenant representative, has worked very hard for our community. He is 85 years old. Every day he is working on this situation. We feel sorry he has to do this at such a late age to make sure our voices are heard. Canada is so big with so much land. Why does this have to be built right in front of our building? The majority of people who are experiencing homelessness are good people. There's just some people who are unwell and we are not comfortable with drug-use. So in the spring and summer we often sit outside; but when there have been situations that have made us feel unsafe, in the past we all hid inside. We ask the city of Toronto to please take care of us. **Ms. Ling – 88 years old**

There is so much land in Toronto. There are already quite a few people sharing this piece of land. It's very hard for the seniors who live here to secure parking already. If we build a building on our front lawn it will become very crowded. There's Long Term Care next door which houses many people. There is Willowdale Manor which houses many people. If we add another building it's going to be very crowded. **Ms. Zhang – 78 years old**

The land in the front of the building is very important to us because the rooms we live in are very small. So in the spring and summer we sit out front to breathe fresh air. In the morning when the weather is good a group of seniors does Tai Chi outside. We even have a dream of having more seating outside under the trees so that we can spend more time there. But now you want to take away the land and build a building. That means we will have less space for us. In the unhoused population there is always a small percentage that is unstable. They are also vulnerable and need support. It is right for the government to care about this population but we are saying this is the wrong location. Since Toronto is so big with ample land to choose from, why do you have to choose a location beside seniors' housing and long term care? Just because they've measured it out and ordered it, that should not be a good excuse. You can place it

somewhere else. Those who are in power please think about us. Think about our needs. If it had nothing to do with me I would say yes this is a great idea. I'm glad they're doing it but I ask them to consider the impact on us. **Ms. Tang – 76 years old**

Visitors parking here in our building is always occupied by tenants and people visiting Cummer Lodge. As a result when our families visit us, they can not find a parking spot. We urgently need more visitors parking for our families visiting us, and this will be even more difficult with the new modular housing in front of our building. Thank you for your understanding and your cooperation. **Ms. Vikma Gomes and Marzia**

I am against this location for supportive housing. But I have no power to stop you. Because we are elderly, our world is our building and the green space in front. That is our entire world. In the back there is a parking lot and a sloped green space that is not accessible for us. It's where a lot of people walk their dogs and not an area where we spend time. After the building is built we will have nowhere to go in our walkers. If there was at least some green space in the front there's space for us to walk around in our walkers. There's so many trees here and the trees are old trees. We will lose everything if the building gets built. We'll have nowhere to go, us seniors, and we'll all be stuck in this building. With the legalization of marijuana which we're not comfortable with, how can we be protected from the air from people smoking cigarettes and marijuana? **Ms. Zhang – 82 years old**

When this decision was made they did not consider some important factors. Because in one building we have all seniors and in the other building we have all LTC seniors. The population that is being housed in supportive housing is vulnerable but we are also a vulnerable population. We are all elderly and cannot handle big shocks. Our hearts are frail. We're not saying those who would live in supportive housing are bad. We're just asking the government to consider another location. Even if there's just one incident, it could have devastating consequences. Who can guarantee us our safety and well-being? Sometimes when I see homeless people smoking marijuana I'm not comfortable and try to avoid being in the area. We're not saying they're bad. But if one person causes risk, that's what I'm afraid of. **Ms. Quan – 75 years old**

We would like to have a peaceful space. We would like to feel safe. We're not saying that all homeless people are dangerous but even one dangerous situation would be unmanageable for us. Our hearts are not strong. In case something happens, what will happen to us? The placement of the modular supportive housing in the middle of the green space, means the new residents as well as us will all not have outdoor space to use. We know that they are vulnerable too. Do they also not need space to move around? We really need to add more parking spots here already. There are many people who live here and cannot find a parking spot. **Ms. Zhang – 75 years old**

The more housing the city builds for the homeless the better. I feel sorry for those who are homeless, and we appreciate the support that the city is going to provide to them. But we want to make sure our safety is not at risk. We all live alone and want to have a safe place to walk around our building without being worried about our safety. **Ms. S. Madden**

I have been living in the building 11 years. It is very peaceful here. People are very friendly. I'm concerned about building the modular housing outside because I'm concerned about the safety of the residents in this building. **Ms. Lee – 71 years old**

I have lived here 12 years. At this age we already cannot give much to our country. Instead we need our country to take care of us. Similar to those in long term care they can no longer contribute to society and need our country to take care of them. Some people may see us as a waste of resources. So now they want to put housing for the unhoused in front of our building. I'm not saying they're all bad people. They are good people. But unfortunately there is a segment of the group that uses drugs or alcohol or can become violent and may have mental health challenges. It would just take one or two people who have these challenges to take away our sense of safety in our community. We previously had a new tenant who lived with us who had serious mental health challenges and was quite violent and hurt us. Even when the tenant was trying to be friendly, their strength resulted in harm to us. There was a tenant who was assaulted and we were all living in fear. We felt powerless.

What will happen if one of the residents of the new modular supportive housing has these struggles? By putting all of us vulnerable people together, what kind of outcome do they expect? We will all suffer. Our lives should matter too. Their lives matter too. Should the government not find a more spacious property that allows these residents to

live. This is my front lawn too. Would any of the city officials welcome someone who is homeless to live on their front lawn? The risk that exists is that by solving one problem by providing housing, we are creating another problem for which there might not be a solution. In Chinese, there's a saying that when you solve one problem another problem emerges. Is the city sure that this won't be the case? **Ms. Hui Zhang – 82 years old**

I've lived here about 10 years. I have a few thoughts to share. We have two opposing views. One is the government's and one is ours. There are two sides to this issue: one side wants to build here and one side doesn't want buildings to be built here. This problem has already challenged us for two years now. From the very beginning we were already protesting by making signs. Because this is a peaceful and democratic country. We already protested for two years now. The government should already know how we feel. Should the government not answer us? Please answer us. Why must this be built here? Then we can understand what they are thinking and why we are against it. Please tell us clearly why this location has been chosen. There must be other locations that have been considered, other possibilities. Which places have which pros and cons? So there should be a discussion about which places have which attributes and compare the different places to pick the best one.

Since you want to build here you should explain why it has to be here. Help us to understand. You should help us to understand because this is a democratic country. You must listen to our feelings and thoughts too and explain your reasoning. You didn't listen to us from the beginning and that is not democratic. So why are there not any other options that have been considered during this time? There is no transparency about what other locations have been considered. We value the green space in front of us. We value our safety. Since this decision will impact us, should our voices not be heard? We have a right to express our concerns. We want to know what other options have been considered for this project. **Ms. Jiang Pingye – 84 years old**

This project is not good for the environment. All these trees will be lost. It will never be the same again. They should not be building on this green space. It doesn't matter what housing needs to be built, it should not be built on this land. It's so close to us that there will be a loss of light. So we shouldn't build it here. This is a senior's only housing. The government takes care of us seniors. They have to take care of our safety too. This building could affect our sense of safety and it will cause us to live with a sense of increased vulnerability. **Mr. Baogui – 83 years old**

My name is **Linghus Yu**. We have leisure time, such as relaxing, exercising, and walking on the front lawn. If more housing is built over there, we will lose a grassland to sit and talk to others, exercise and walk. There are so many lands in Canada. Why must they build modular housing outside our front lawn?

I feel stressed because I don't know what kind of homeless people will move into the modular housing next to me—it makes me feel very worried, restless and unsafe. I live on the second floor, and the windows are not protected. There is only a piece of glass, and I don't have a safety bar attached. People outside can easily break in. Consider we are seniors with no resistance and protection ability. There is a lot of psychological pressure. **Linghus Yu**

My name is **Shu Hul Lu**. I am 84 years old and diagnosed with cancer in 2004. I am a chronic patient. I have insomnia problems and need to take insomnia medicine. However, I no longer take it anymore. I can fall asleep after taking it at night and also experience dizziness the next day. I fell on the ground and bathtub a few times at home because of the dizziness and was once sent to the hospital for examination.

My husband has Parkinson's disease. We stayed on the first floor and already felt very scared and unsafe. Because people often park their cars and talk outside our windows. I don't know who they are, only that they speak English.

I understand that homeless people have human rights and a need for shelter. However, when considering their needs, the government should also consider the safety of the seniors. Some of these homeless people may have drug, alcohol and mental problems. We are old people without resistance. They are bringing anxiety and worry to our life safety. **Shu Hul Lu**

My name is **Cheng Jin Ying**, and I am an over-80-year-old senior. We fear losing the extensive grassland and woods in front of our building because of the modular housing project. This is a place for us to use for leisure. Some say the seniors can go to the grassland beside the parking lot behind the building for activities. That is impossible because the grass on the south side of the rear parking lot is unbalanced and has a slope. It is difficult for older people to exercise or walk there. It is easy to fall because the grass surface is not parallel, and it is very unsafe. It is even more dangerous for older people in wheelchairs and walkers. Going to the east is the woods. We don't know what animals exist, so we dare not walk through it.

I have a lot of sympathy for the homeless people and understand they need shelter. However, the most important thing for us elderly is to consider the issue of safety because most of the elderly live in this building alone with health issues such as heart problems, insomnia, and anxiety. We don't know what the impact will be of living with people struggling with mental health and addiction challenges in modular housing next to our building. I hope the government will have security for homeless people. At the same time, the safety of our elderly is guaranteed.

We need more parking spaces here in our building. If so, our land will be even less after building Modular housing on the front lawn outside. Adding parking spaces is challenging. We don't have a supermarket within walking distance, and we need a ride or take the bus to pick up groceries. However, I have difficulty riding the bus at an advanced age. My daughter helps out with grocery shopping once a week or two. But if she can't find a parking space, she cannot stay longer to visit me. She only can drop the groceries off at the front entrance. We want to keep the front lawn and increase parking spaces. **Cheng Jin Ying**

We are dealing with tons of problems right now and you are going to add to them. We do not have enough parking spots. We need safety. We want to make sure we have access to green space. As a matter of fact, we know the homeless people also need a place to live the same as us, but is there no other place to build in Toronto? There is a concern about peace for seniors. It is hard when a lot of things are going on already, and adding more risk and complexity to it is causing anxiety for us.

They should have come to the table and got the opinion of the community of seniors to make sure what will work. This would avoid wasting city funds.

Make sure the steady and reliable support is provided to those who are suffering from addiction. There must be a solution to this problem. Don't provide drugs to them through safe injection. Give them the medical and psychological support that they deserve. **Ms. Jacinth**

I am the one who lives at 175 Commer right now and I will be the one who is going to deal with the new residents who come to live in the front of our building. I have been living here since 1998. And I do not support the proposal to build housing in our green space. It is going to be very difficult for us to live here because there will be fighting every day, and the police usually come very late.

Don't bring us down in the sake of helping others. Help them build life, but don't destroy our life. **A resident of Willowdale Manor**

We will not feel safe here if these vulnerable people come to live in the front of the building. We all live alone, but half of the homeless population have mental health and addiction problems. I will not feel safe to go outside at night anymore.

All I want is peace of mind. I am a senior and cannot defend myself. I will be suffering from mental health problems, mainly depression.

We need the use of green space and some seating. You, who run the city, are responsible for our safety and security. It is part of your job to think of the effect of your decision on the lives of this many seniors. If anything happens as a result of your poor judgment, you should be accountable. Safety is our most important need that directly affects our mental health. I moved here in 2009 from Scarborough. **Ms. Novbar Youkhannay (Bella)**