



September 25, 2024

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Charitable No. 10809-3642-RR0001
2023-2024

Reena: Driving Change to Meet
Growing Needs.

Planning and Housing Committee
City of Toronto
Committee Room 1, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

To the Planning and Housing Committee:

**Re: Support for Item 2024.PH15.6 – Increasing the City's Supply of Accessible
Affordable Housing**

As a charitable organization committed to providing housing and support for individuals with developmental disabilities, Reena strongly endorses the recommendations outlined in the report, "Increasing the City's Supply of Accessible Affordable Housing." Our extensive experience in providing housing for some of the most vulnerable populations in Ontario highlights the critical need for accessible and affordable homes in the City of Toronto.

Currently, Reena operates in Toronto 26 homes, 60 Supported Independent Living (SIL) apartments, and the **Lou Fruitman Reena Residence** (LFRR) 79 units, serving over 1,000 individuals with developmental and physical disabilities, as well as severe mental health challenges, through our programs. In managing these properties, we prioritize accessibility, safety, and universal design—key tenets of the proposed City guidelines. Our newest development, the **Frankfort Family Reena Residence**, set to open in 2026, will serve 168 individuals and will integrate many of these principles, creating more deeply affordable and accessible units.

A critical gap exists for individuals with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges, who often face compounded barriers in accessing suitable housing. As noted in the **Fiscal Accountability Office's 2023 report**, Ontario has a significant shortage of deeply affordable housing, leaving individuals with disabilities on waitlists for years. For example, ODSP recipients receive only \$556 monthly for shelter costs, while the median rent in Toronto far exceeds \$1,900 for a bachelor apartment. This disparity emphasizes the urgency of addressing accessibility and affordability simultaneously.

While financial challenges are significant the greater risk is in the loss of housing and absences of any housing that meets the **B3 Fire Safety Standards**—which go beyond standard residential safety requirements and are required for care occupancy buildings. Three or more people in a building receiving supports of daily living from an agency triggers a care occupancy status from a fire perspective . As a baseline all city of Toronto funded new builds should include this standard . These standards ensure that buildings can support the needs of residents with limited mobility or cognitive impairments, who may require additional time and support to evacuate in an emergency.



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Reena's commitment to **access** extends beyond regulatory compliance. Our approach integrates 30% high-accessibility units in all developments, in addition to ensuring all units meet or exceed code and CMHC accessibility standards. We work closely with Rick Hanson Foundation to support others in designing and planning for diverse needs. No two people are alike but creating a clarified vision that includes some of the proposed changes will advance housing options for us all. The adoption of accessible design standards city-wide, as recommended by the Accessible Housing Working Group, will allow more residents to live safely and with dignity in homes that can accommodate changing mobility needs over time.

We also support the City's call for additional funding to implement these accessibility upgrades. Without dedicated funding, developers and non-profit providers like Reena are often unable to meet the growing demand for accessible housing while maintaining affordability. We encourage the City to further explore partnerships with provincial and federal housing initiatives to bridge this gap.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We remain committed to partnering with the City of Toronto in delivering much-needed accessible, affordable housing solutions that prioritize equity and inclusion for all.

In the disability world we often say there are two types of people those that need accessibility support and those that will.

Sincerely,

Bryan Keshen
CEO