



**MORE NEIGHBOURS
TORONTO**

Dear Members of the Planning & Housing Committee,

RE: PH 20.8 - Swansea Mews Initial Development Proposal

About More Neighbours Toronto

[More Neighbours Toronto](#) is a volunteer-only organization of housing advocates that believe in building more multi-family homes of all kinds for those who dream of building their lives in Toronto. We advocate for reforms to increase our city's ability to build more homes in every neighbourhood. We are a big-tent organization with members across the political spectrum who are committed to counterbalancing the anti-housing agenda that has dominated Toronto's politics, created an affordability crisis, and cost burdened a new generation of aspiring residents. We are firmly committed to the principle that housing is a human right and believe Toronto should be inclusive and welcoming to all.

Position

More Neighbours Toronto is disappointed to see the delays in returning the residents of Swansea Mews to their homes. With many revitalizations of Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) either underway or anticipated in the near future we urge Council and staff to:

1. Work to set out reasonable expedited timelines for the design and approval of public housing projects, particularly in the case of demovictions like Swansea Mews, where tenants are displaced
2. Work with all due alacrity to return the residents of Swansea Mews to their homes

People Can't Live in Condemned Buildings

In the spring of 2022, the 154 households that made up the community of Swansea Mews learned that their homes were to be condemned and that they would be displaced from their homes. This was a shocking turn of events and caused great hardship for the many long-time residents of this community. While TCHC and Housing Secretariat staff responded well to secure alternative housing for the members of the community, we are little closer today to getting those residents back to the community that they love. Their uninhabitable homes still sit where they were three years ago. Nearly three years later, staff and council are only now

looking to ask for a demolition permit. This represents an unacceptable delay. Toronto Community Housing Corporation and by extension the City of Toronto and its Council owe a duty of care to the displaced residents of Swansea Mews as their landlord. It should be the highest priority of TCHC, this Committee and Council to return these people to their homes. Getting to the first stage gate after three years shows a profound disrespect to the people who have had their lives upended by the condemnation of Swansea Mews. This must never happen again.

Unfortunately, TCHC and TSHC find themselves in the unfortunate position of having multiple buildings that have either already been condemned or are in such an advanced state of disrepair that they will soon become unlivable. While the engineering issues at Swansea Mews may have been unique, the lived experience of public housing tenants being displaced from their homes because those homes are no longer livable is tragically not. The Planning & Housing Committee and Council must treat these situations differently.

Normal Procedures Should Not Apply to Emergencies

In 2019, Council approved a framework for the revitalization and/or rehabilitation of public housing in Toronto. The intention of that framework was to ensure that Council had due oversight over these large, expensive and disruptive projects. This was a reasonable goal. However, that framework relies on the existing homes being viable throughout the process right up until construction begins. That simply was not possible at Swansea Mews. It will not be possible for the next TCHC or TSHC community displaced because their homes are no longer liveable. This Committee and Council need to recognize that the slow and deliberate approach outlined in the 2019 framework is wholly unsuitable to these cases. The City of Toronto needs an expedited version that returns residents to their homes more quickly. This doesn't imply that staff should cut corners, nor that council oversight need be removed. We ask members of the Planning & Housing Committee to urge staff to provide a reasonable, expedited timeline for design, approval, financing and construction. This would provide clear benchmarks for staff to work towards and, more importantly, set reasonable expectations for displaced tenants. Even after the report before you, tenants of Swansea Mews don't even have an estimate as to when their homes will be rebuilt and they will be able to return.

Swansea Mews Must Be Rebuilt As Soon As Possible

After nearly three years of delay, TCHC and the City find themselves in the most challenging housing construction environment Toronto has faced in a generation. More Neighbours Toronto is not ignorant nor blind to those realities. However, this cannot be used as an excuse for inaction at Swansea Mews. It is profoundly disappointing that direction to seek CMHC financing and provincial funding for this project is only being asked for in this report. We would have hoped that this had already been secured after nearly three years. We also have read with concern the letter from HousingNowTO that was [submitted](#) to the TCHC Board with respect to this project. If the primary source of funding for this project is to be accompanying market units, staff and council must be realistic about the density required to achieve that. We share council's frustration with the delays on many Housing Now sites caused by initial massing that was

insufficient to meet the financial need. As ever, More Neighbours Toronto supports higher densities at this site. All the more so if it achieves the crucial goal of returning the residents of Swansea Mews to their homes.

Regards,

Aaron Ginsberg

More Neighbours Toronto