

To Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

My name is Diana Chan McNally, and I am a long-time community worker and homelessness advocate, as well as a born and raised Rexdalian.

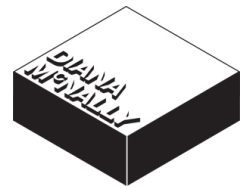
Homelessness isn't new to Rexdale. I know, because I lived it: as a teenager living at Islington and Finch, I was kicked out of my home at the age of 15. The only resources that were available to me at the time were the occasional couch — which I am so grateful for and privileged to have had — and food vouchers I was able to access at the Albion Mall.

Since my time as a homeless youth in Rexdale, there are more resources available — including incredible agencies and programs by and for community members who are struggling, low-income, and homeless. At the same time, the need continues to grow, and in fact surpasses what is currently available, despite the best efforts of every social service organization in the area. Anyone who has walked the Albion or Rexdale Malls knows that these have served as de facto shelter for people with nowhere else to go. We've also seen Black-led churches step up to shelter African asylum seekers in the absence of federal supports. It's clear that more resources are needed to address the intersecting crises of homelessness and housing affordability in the area. I also recognize that these resources are beyond the capacity of what the City of Toronto can offer on its own.

However, in the case of 7-9 Wardlaw Crescent — 51 units of desperately needed supportive housing — this is a project entirely funded by the CMHC. Indeed, this is a case of federal funding going where it should: to support the City of Toronto to build a housing project in a community that needs it. The opportunity shouldn't be wasted.

Importantly, this housing was developed using a “Made in Rexdale” approach — that is, an innovative community development model generated through a partnership of local agencies: Youth Without Shelter, Midaynta, Delta Family Resource Centre, Albion Youth Services, and the Rexdale Women's Centre. As a long-time worker in the field, I trust them to provide the safe, decent, supportive housing community members need because these agencies are already embedded in Rexdale, doing the work. This Committee should trust them too — they are the experts, as are the people currently using services in Rexdale and who would benefit from this housing. Any decision-making on the 7-9 Wardlaw Crescent housing project must prioritize their perspectives first.

Sadly, there are community members who have been advocating against this housing project. Importantly, they are neither service providers nor service users. As residents without expertise on the issue, they have publicly misconstrued the nature of this project. This has been done with the express intent of gaining petition signatures by calling 7-9 Wardlaw “another homeless shelter” instead of what it actually is — supportive housing — with the purpose of stigmatizing the project and potential service users.



Here is a flyer that they have publicly posted throughout Rexdale:

Another homeless shelter in our area? Not on our watch!

The City of Toronto is planning to build a **homeless shelter disguised as “affordable housing”** at **7-9 Wardlaw Crescent**, right beside an existing shelter for seniors, with little to no consultation with the community. Only residents in the immediate proximity were informed, while the remainder of the neighbourhood - who will all be impacted - was left in the dark. Key details, such as the project's funding, approval process, and potential impacts on crime, traffic, infrastructure and property values - remain unclear. This development raises serious concerns about safety and transparency, and we deserve real answers before it's pushed through. Get informed and make your voice heard - **scan the QR code to learn more and sign our petition here:**

@AGNEC_ASSOCIATION agnec_association

To learn more or get involved, contact: agnecassociation@gmail.com

LET'S STAND TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Again, in its decision-making, this Committee should consider the implications of delaying or cancelling this project because of purposeful misinformation about what the project is, who it serves, and what it achieves. There are 51 Rexdalians waiting to have a safe, decent home that they deserve, and that the City could absolutely provide.

Rexdale needs the 7-9 Wardlaw Crescent project. Trust that this need exists. Trust that the experts who will operate this project know what the community needs to be safe and equitable. Let's do everything we can to address the housing crisis — together.

Diana Chan McNally
Community Worker and Maytree Fellow
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