

Presentation: to Planning & Housing Development Committee - December 3, 2025

Subject: RE: City Proposal for Licensing Multi-tenant houses

By: David Walsh - representing www.crisisinourcity.ca

Re City's proposed building code change for a premise with four or more multi-tenant house rooms, inhabited or intended to be inhabited by persons who do not live together as a single housekeeping unit.

Introduction:

This is a Memo from a small non-profit housing organization identifying the challenges it faces in meeting the City's proposed changes for licensing Multi-tenant houses.

Memo: November 25, 2025:

Hi David, we have tried several times with different parties to have our situation recognized as "a single housekeeping unit" emphasizing that the occupants have a common background and life-situation, they co-operate together, are involved in regular house-meetings to resolve issues and have a program manager who maintains a high level contact with each home and occupant. Each time the officials have repeated that we are regarded as a rooming house, not a single housekeeping unit. It seems that as each one pays rent separately and the occupants are not related, we are not going to convince people otherwise.

Two of our board members did meet with Gord Perks, Committee Chair, some months ago and while he was sympathetic, he countered that the City will assist by making loans available and that making exceptions was not workable.

We have received estimates for 2 houses, one was \$45,000, the other \$140,000. The latter is for a modern, very new townhouse. The other is for a standard one story with a finished basement that we have already spent \$8,000 to meet fire code/department requirements. So with a disparity like that, there is no way to know with a typical house. To the best of my knowledge, the max loan is \$25,000 so it does not cover costs. I believe the loan is forgivable over a period of 15 years. When the properties are rented such as how we operate, the owner may not be interested in seeing the changes that would make the house acceptable. Rather they want to preserve it for possible future rental or use by family. And it is very uncertain that the property would be available for 15 years which would be necessary for the loan to be fully forgiven.

Why is the City making it more difficult for small non-profits to respond to the need to support individuals who are homeless. There are many dedicated people at City Hall working to address the challenges facing the unhoused in our city but it is evident from my volunteer efforts with non-profit housing projects that different departments at the City are working in silos, and there is a lack of consideration of trade-offs in the policies they adopt, particularly in terms of lives lost to homelessness. There is also an urgent need to

recognize that ‘one size does not fit all’ as the city is proposing with its proposed code amendments.

One of the reasons for the historical lack of progress on RGI housing for Toronto is that there is no Housing Advocate at the City. Non-profits are given minimal support and valuable housing density increases have been given away to developers with little being asked for in return. See “The Great Toronto Giveaway” (attached). In contrast Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) is part of the City Planning Division, and it advocates for heritage structures to be preserved.

By adding more regulations for operating multi-tenant housing, we need to ask at what ‘cost of lives lost’ do these regulations become unworkable. Many projects will not be able to proceed because of the cost of meeting fire and other city codes. If the City is intent on approving its new building code proposal, it would make sense to purchase blocks of vacant condos. There is currently an opportunity to make proposals to investors who need to sell.

There is an urgent need to identify options that are more affordable for creating housing for individuals who are homeless. The Federal government does not want a repeat of previous spending extravagance where the City, with funding from the federal government, paid an average of over \$200 per room per night for hotel rooms to house refugee claimants. That is over \$6,000 per month. I have not seen the total costs of hotel rooms for Toronto, but the cost for the 14 hotels in the Niagara Region was recorded as \$545 million over 18 months.

The monies spent on hotels in Toronto could have had a much greater positive impact if the City had been willing to work more with non-profit housing organizations to create interim responses in buildings that have been sitting empty.

There are substantial buildings in Toronto that are sitting vacant that had the potential to provide accommodation for people who are unhoused, and they could have been operated by non-profits with support from the City.

Here are two examples.

95 St Joseph Street was formerly occupied by the Basilian Fathers and has about 60 rooms plus other ancillary spaces that could provide accommodation for individuals on social assistance This building has sat empty for the past 3 years.

95 St Joseph Street - possible interim shelter - potential for 80 + rooms



Another example of a building that could have been an interim shelter is 2685 Kingston Rd., a property that was owned by Scarboro Missions, and was previously operated as a popular retreat centre. It will eventually be developed as a high school, but it has been vacant for the past 4 years.

There are other examples of buildings that have been sitting vacant. These facilities would have offered the City the opportunity to provide interim accommodation at much lower costs than its hotel options.

An example of an initiative that has worked to provide transitional housing is a project where I volunteered for 12 years – 3 large houses adjacent to the Loblaw store on Broadview Ave, south of Danforth. Loblaw's agreed to rent these houses at a low rent, and these houses have provided transitional accommodation for 26 men for the past 15 years. These men had completed treatment for addiction at a detox centre, and they then lived at the Broadview homes for approximately one year.

With the current collapse of the condo market, there are many homes sitting vacant on development sites, where the City could negotiate with the developers to rent the homes until the condo market revives. An example would be the 8 vacant townhouses on Glazebrook Ave – beside the Esso service station, two blocks north of Eglinton, off Bayview. These houses would be ideal for refugee families. Is anyone at the City looking at such opportunities. See [Glazebrook Ave - Bayview & Eglinton](#) - most of these houses are now sitting vacant with a wire fence around them.

The City of Toronto itself owns vacant homes, such as the large house at 136 Spadina Road. There are two other city owned houses on either side at #134 and #140 Spadina - these two are both operational. Why has 136 Spadina Road sat empty for 5 years. [PDF 136, 138 & 140 Spadina Road](#) The lot of #138 Spadina with the backyard of #136 and #140 Spadina could be a substantial tiny home site.

The City is working to develop new affordable housing projects and shelters, but these projects take 4 to 10 years to plan and build. Adding additional criteria and requirements for shelters will mean longer delays. For example, the proposed shelter at 2299 Dundas St West has been underway for about 7 years, and it is not even close to being finished. Neighbourhood opposition was a factor but recent delays are due more to the City's new environmental standards for city buildings.

More than three homeless Torontonians died every week last year, public health data shows — “a total of 187 lives lost while battling with housing precarity in Canada's largest city..... “Lives were taken by cancers and cardiovascular diseases, by pneumonia and accidents, but more than anything, people died because of toxic drug supplies that have been known to public health since 2022.”

Tiny Homes are a model that has shown success in other cities for responding to individuals with substance use challenges. The toxic drug supply today is a serious challenge — identified as the cause of 47 per cent of the deaths among the homeless population. The City of Toronto is infamous for its blockage of proposals for Tiny Homes. Architect John van Nostrand and his team have created a “Two Step Home Proposal’ that could be a positive response to Toronto's housing crisis, but this proposal has been continually rebuffed by the City. Paul Bedford, Toronto's former Planning Director has spoken in favour of the Two-

Step Home Proposal, and at a recent meeting, former Mayor Barbara Hall commented that it is important that individuals have their own door, and said to call her for a donation when it proceeds. Other cities in Ontario have successful tiny home projects, and the City of Fredericton (population 72,000) has a successful 95unit tiny home project. Similarly, Gord Tanner said that one of the learning experiences of the Novotel project is

Toronto is the wealthiest cities in Canada, yet over 15,000 people are unhoused. Every day, 200 people are turned away from shelters. Every week, five lives are lost on our streets.

I urge the City to support initiatives that support small non-profit organizations.

Attached: The Great Toronto Giveaway

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Presentation to the City's Planning and Housing Committee - Wed Dec 3rd
[Planning and Housing Committee - Meeting 26 - TMMIS](#)

[Agenda Item History - 2025.PH26.3](#)

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