

TO: **Planning and Housing Committee**

DATE: Tuesday, February 15, 2022

RE: Delegation of Authorities to Administer Housing and Homelessness Services (**Item PH31.2**)



Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today to share our strong support for the recommendations before you today in Item PH31.2.

My name is Kira Heineck, and I am the Executive Director of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH.) The TAEH is a collective impact initiative made up of Community Partners focussed on systems changes and housing and support solutions to make homelessness in Toronto rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The changes effected by the recommendations in today's report are very welcomed. The TAEH and our partners have long envisioned and advocated for a more streamlined governance approach that takes the whole continuum of housing and homelessness services into account. In planning, funding, operations, data collection, performance measurement and in course-corrections.

In June of 2018, we deputed to the Special Committee on Governance, with a deputation signed by many, on the need and rationale for a single Standing Committee on Housing. This was when the then Affordable Housing Committee was only a special committee and there was great excitement that we would all – elected officials, City staff, community voices and people with lived experience - work on housing solutions to prevent and end homelessness through one committee.

Of course, events transpired later in 2018 to radically alter the make up of Council overall, and the need to redesign the Council Committee structure as a whole. Therefore, in February 2019, I came again before the Special Committee on Governance to make the case for "one single and coordinated place for discussions and decision-making regarding the City's actions along the whole continuum of homelessness and housing."

At the time, it proved difficult to strike one committee for this continuum as the authorities and the duties, funding sources etc. through which housing and homelessness services are delivered were split amongst 3 different City divisions: SSHA, the Housing Secretariat and SDFA.

And while the TAEH has worked well with both the resulting committees since then, and both applaud and are encouraged by the progress made in moving to a more housing-focussed response to homelessness, this next step of consolidating the authority for housing and related housing services with the Housing Secretariat, and streamlining homelessness services with SSHA, will allow even more success in both areas.

The TAEH is part of the Housing TO Advisory Council, including one of our Steering Committee members, David Reycraft of Dixon Hall, serving as the Co-Chair during the plan's development. We are encouraged and confident that these changes will allow the Housing TO vision and action plan to be better executed, delivering better outcomes for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

One of the key recent commitments of this committee and City Council, embedded now in Housing TO, is the creation of 18,000 supportive housing units. As you are well aware, this will make a significant impact in ending homelessness for many people in Toronto. And these changes to the delegated authorities will ensure greater coordination across City efforts and in working with the community, including our Toronto Supportive Housing Growth Plan.

The recommendations in this report also better support the strategic shift of direction approved by Council in December 2020 (Item PH19.11) to maintain a robust housing-focused emergency shelter system while pivoting to more sustainable long-term solutions to homelessness through the provision of permanent affordable and supportive housing.

In closing, I must take this opportunity to recognize the dedication and talent of City staff in both the Housing Secretariat and SSHA in grappling with addressing homelessness. We believe that these changes, including the important addition of the Tower Renewal program, will better support their ability to focus their efforts even more effectively to creating a Toronto where homeless truly is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Thank you,

Kira Heineck, Executive Lead

416-529-7521

kira.heineck@taeh.ca

TAEH Steering Committee

Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto
Community Living Toronto
COTA
Covenant House Toronto
Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services
Fife House
Fred Victor Centre
Homes First Society

Houselink & Mainstay Community Housing
John Howard Society - Toronto
Loft Community Services
The Access Point
Toronto Developmental Services Association
United Way of Greater Toronto
Wellesley Institute
WoodGreen Community Services