



TO: Planning and Housing Committee

DATE: Tuesday, July 5, 2022

RE: **Renoviction Policy – Creating a Framework to Protect Affordable and Mid-range Rental Homes and Deter Renovictions** (Item PH35.18)

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). My name is Mark Aston and I am the Chair of the TAEH - a network of partners reaching across the city, all united in the vision of ending homelessness. We also serve as your non-Indigenous Community Advisory Board, and co-chair the Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum with SSHA. I am also the Executive Director of Covenant House Toronto.

Our written deputation for today's committee meeting speaks to several important items that further our collective goal of making homelessness in Toronto rare, brief, and nonrecurring: Items 9, 18, 19, 20 and 22.

All these items support the Right to Housing, further access to safe and secure housing, contribute to preventing and ending homelessness in equity-seeking communities, support actions to protect and/or curb the loss of affordable housing in all Toronto neighbourhoods and increase the transparency and fairness of access systems.

I am speaking now to Item **PH35.18: Renoviction Policy – Creating a Framework to Protect Affordable and Mid-range Rental Homes and Deter Renovictions**.

## **RENOVICTION POLICY**

There is no doubt that taking action to tackle renovictions in Toronto is critically needed, and the Alliance supports the recommendations in today's staff report that aim to do so.

### **Context**

Eviction is a significant cause of homelessness. As today's report cites, over 150,000 eviction applications were filed in Toronto for non-payment of rent alone. The latest Toronto Street Needs Assessment (2021) told us that the top 2 reasons for why people become homeless are not having enough income to pay rent and tenant-landlord conflict. Correspondingly, the first 3 solutions people experiencing homelessness identify are related to affordability and income.

As the 2018 Canadian Housing Study found that amongst Canada's 10 largest census areas, households in Toronto are in the greatest core housing need in the country, and the recent Toronto Housing Market

Analysis identified that a full 87% of low-income renters are living in unaffordable housing, with 50% of them in turn in severely unaffordable housing (paying over 50% of their income on rent), it is clear that too many Torontonians are teetering on the brink of eviction. And with the high cost of housing of all kinds in our city, and the dearth of affordable options, homelessness will be the outcome for many.

Minimizing the risk of eviction in Toronto is, therefore, one of our most effective tools in preventing homelessness. As we all know that equity seeking communities experience core housing need and evictions at much higher rates than the general population, addressing evictions of all kinds, also furthers our collective goals of increasing equitable access to good, safe, and affordable housing for households at disproportionate risk of homelessness.

Finally, within the context of immediate pressures such as the fall out of the pandemic, rising costs of living and the increased financialization of the housing market, it is even more urgent to take action to protect Toronto's renters.

## **Renovictions**

As with eviction rates overall, renovictions in Toronto are also only increasing. As today's report cites, renovation applications rose a full 232% from 2015 to 2018 alone. Renovictions are a significant challenge to stemming the loss of affordable rental units, but one that the City of Toronto can do more to stop.

The Renoviction Policy recommended today, with its supporting framework for creating a new by-law, implementation plan and the cross-departmental Housing At-Risk Table, will give the City a fighting chance. Highlights that the TAEH is particularly pleased to support include:

- The "education-first" approach as which leverages what the City can do in the face of renovictions outside of the Ontario *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA), supporting landlords with challenges and promoting housing stability for tenants.
- An interdivisional strategy, through the new Housing At-Risk Table, to strengthen the City's coordinated responses in preventing affordable housing loss and implementation, compliance, and enforcement of the future new by-law and in supporting tenants at risk of eviction.
- Coordinating emergency relocations and supports for tenants who have been evicted.
- The focus on improving data collection practices to improve the City's overall data strategy, filling important gaps as outlined as part of the Housing At-Risk Table's work.
- The identification of recommending policy and program changes to the City Manager to address systemic and structural gaps as part of the Housing At-Risk Table's mandate.

We understand that not all the levers to stop renovictions are within the City of Toronto's control. There are many key things that the provincial and federal governments must also do as detailed in today's recommendations. The Alliance fully supports these recommendations and will continue to advocate to both orders of government to act on them. In the meantime, we believe that the recommendations before you today, making up the proposed Renovation Policy, take full advantage of what the City can do.

### **Adding an Intended Outcome statement**

The one addition to the draft Renoviction Policy (attachment 1) that the Alliance does recommend is that this Committee add a statement on this policy's contribution to **preventing homelessness** and/or to **achieving the City's vision of homelessness being rare, brief, and non-recurring** to its *Intended Outcomes* on page 2.

We urge you to add this amendment to the report and pass it as amended to send to City Council for final approval later this month.

We look forward to working with you, City staff and all the TAEH partners to support the success of this policy and framework in the coming years, and to maximize its ability to further our shared vision of a Toronto where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Thank you,

Mark Aston, Chair

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### **TAEH Steering Committee**

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