

February 10, 2022

Mayor Tory, Executive Committee, and Members of Council
City of Toronto - City Hall, 100 Queen St. West.

By email to: buc@toronto.ca



Dear Mayor Tory and Members of Council:

Re: 2022 City Budget

As you reach final decisions on the 2022 City Budget at Executive Committee on February 11th and Council on February 17th, I am writing to urge attention to supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness.

TAEH is a network of over 100 partners across the city, united in the vision of ending homelessness. We are the City's non-Indigenous Community Advisory Board, and with SSHA we co-chair the Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum. Our priorities include ensuring Toronto has enough deeply affordable housing to prevent and end homelessness. Only then will we achieve our shared goal, which Council committed to in the *HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan*, to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Council members are well aware of how homelessness has worsened through two years of pandemic. TAEH members have worked actively with the City to move hundreds of clients to socially distanced settings in leased hotels etc. and start operating the new modular housing. The challenge this year is to house and support more people in private apartments or rooms who would otherwise become homeless again.

Supportive housing is the key to achieving these goals. It has a successful track record in stable housing for people who have experienced chronic homelessness or who live with disabilities, including mental health issues or addictions. We commend the City's strong leadership and action on creating more affordable and supportive housing.

The Housing Secretariat is projecting 2,000 new supportive housing units operational by the end of 2022, through combined efforts of the City, the federal government, and community-based providers. The SSHA budget note (<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-175007.pdf>) forecasts operating costs of such units at \$27.6 million in 2022 and \$48 million annually in 2023 onward. This remains unfunded by the Province, and TAEH has made a submission to the Provincial budget consultation underlining their responsibility. It is attached for your reference.

In support of these goals, we urge the following three priorities in the City of Toronto's 2022 budget:

Committed to Ending Homelessness

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1. Fund support services and rent supplement in new affordable housing that is now being developed, and in private rental units for people experiencing homelessness.

People experiencing homelessness or living with mental illness, addictions, developmental or other disabilities require very low rents (e.g., ODSP \$497 level or lower), as well as support services. The primary responsibility for this rests with the provincial government, and we have urged increased provincial action on this.

In recent years, the City has used federal and provincial programs such as Investment in Affordable Housing and Home For Good to fund housing allowances and other rent subsidies. The City also helps fund some support services in Alternative Housing Providers, whose residents are part of the population in need. More people need rent subsidies – project-based RGI in the new supportive housing units, and portable subsidies (allowances) to help people to leave homelessness by obtaining and affording private-rental units.

The City, as well as the Province, needs to take further action on this. The SSHA social housing budget, which supports both Toronto Community Housing and non-profit providers, no longer faces the severe pressures experienced through the 2010s. To meet today's needs requires making available more RGI (rent geared to income) subsidies to non-profits to help them house people in need. Portable and project-based RGI enable supportive housing providers to provide deeply affordable rents to more clients.

2. Sustain emergency shelter and supportive housing providers through adequate salaries.

Community-based shelter and housing providers struggle with unfilled positions, staff turnover and related issues in the pandemic. Their services are essential to the goal of reducing and ending homelessness. With rising numbers of clients to support, providers are finding it challenging to attract and retain qualified staff.

These workers are paid much less than direct City employees or most health care workers. Providers have not received funding for cost-of-living increases for several years and face further constraints under the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act* ('Bill 124'). We have raised this issue with the provincial government. The current temporary wage enhancement for community-based front-line workers is a step in the right direction. We urge the City to take more permanent steps to fund community-based emergency shelter and supportive housing providers at levels enabling them to treat employees more fairly and provide services most effectively.

3. Support implementation of the Toronto Supportive Housing Growth Plan

As Council is aware, TAEH has prepared a Toronto Supportive Housing Growth Plan (TSHGP), in collaboration with other organizations. This is an evidence-informed ten-year strategy to expand the supportive housing system in Toronto, to meet serious mental health needs and end chronic homelessness. Success in the strategy will depend on contributions from all levels of government and community-based sources: for coordination and planning; and for capital, rent supplement and support services funding. In 2022, we look forward to collaborating with the City and with SSHA and the Housing

Secretariat, both in implementation planning processes and in securing sufficient capital, rent supplement and support funding for the future.

TAEH values the ongoing partnership with the City in moving toward our shared goals. Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours truly,



Kira Heineck
Executive Director, TAEH

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