

Planning & Housing Committee, 10 December 2019
Agenda Item PH11.5

Deputation from the Right to Housing in Toronto Campaign

Delivered by Emily Paradis

Thanks to previous deputants, Committee members, staff, and everyone in this room for bringing this Plan to fruition.

Today I am speaking on behalf of the Right to Housing in Toronto campaign, a group of organizations and individuals who came together to encourage the City to adopt a rights-based approach to its next housing plan.

First – congratulations! It is wonderful to mark International Human Rights Day with the launch of Canada’s first municipal housing and homelessness plan founded on the recognition of the human right to adequate housing. This is a moment worth celebrating.

Good things come out of good process. The process of developing the HousingTO Plan was a model of rights-based participation, with consultations across the City, convened by local organizations, bringing together diverse residents directly affected by homelessness and inadequate housing – members of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, people with disabilities, women fleeing violence, people facing homelessness, members of racialized, immigrant, and refugee communities, youth, and seniors.

This approach to policy-making is risky. By asking people what they need from the HousingTO Plan, the City created expectations - that the Plan would deliver what people need, and that the City would engage us in putting the Plan into action. Now, the Plan’s human rights framework gives Torontonians a powerful tool to hold the City accountable. That’s even riskier.

We thank you for taking those risks. Because without bold, courageous action, the risk will continue to land on the most vulnerable people in our city, with devastating consequences.

So today, we ask you to keep taking risks. We ask you to pass this historic housing plan based in human rights – and to make it even stronger, today and in the years to come.

We welcome the new Toronto Housing Charter - and we ask you to commit to the prompt establishment of an independent Housing Commissioner, to make the promises of the Charter a reality.

We welcome the emphasis on housing-focused solutions for homelessness - and we ask you to respond to the homelessness emergency by providing adequate and dignified shelter for all who require it, until the structural drivers of the homelessness crisis have been remedied.

We welcome the allocation of City lands and funds for building 40,000 homes – and we ask you to prioritize City resources for permanently affordable housing for those most in need.

We welcome the rapid implementation of Inclusionary Zoning and other planning initiatives that will significantly increase the city's capacity to deliver affordable housing using a new income-based definition - and we look forward to a made-in-Toronto, human rights-based approach to City planning, that puts people before profit in the development process.

Bold action, founded on human rights, is our city's best hope for surmounting the housing and homelessness crisis that threatens the well-being of individuals and communities. It's a risk we can't afford not to take.