



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Middlesex
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Middlesex
La santé mentale pour tous

Sept 12, 2019

To the STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND POLICY COMMITTEE,

Thank you for allowing the opportunity to provide input to the deliberations ahead of you.

At the risk of over simplification of a complicated issue, I would like to propose a simple reflection that can guide the decisions you have before you:

Those that provide Supported and Supportive Housing in our community are in need of affordable housing stock. Community Housing is in need of support for their housing stock. Therefore, the solution at hand is to provide Not for Profit Supportive Housing Providers with available, and yet to be developed affordable housing stock.

By sheer proximity of available onsite supports, organizations like CMHA Middlesex can support the community that exists within present property and future development. If community housing had the ability to increase cash flow on their present portfolio, then the need for incurred debt from the city on capital investments and supportive staffing could be greatly reduced.

I know that the model I am proposing works because CMHA Middlesex has had the most success with this model amongst many we have used in our over 30 years of our Supportive Housing Experience. We presently have successful partnerships with LMHC, and private landlords where we provide supports onsite. We are already in collaboration with LMHC to further expand this solution. Having affordable units to support our tenants greatly reduces the need for supplements that cannot keep up with the market cost. If community housing had more ability for Supportive Housing agencies to take on more units, and stack supplement/subsidy rather than just RGI, this would indeed increase the much needed cash flow and supports for the vacant units that need to be filled.

City council is aware of the record low vacancy rate and record high rental rates in our area (including the county). In the development of affordable units, through HDC, we need to ensure that they are available to the most vulnerable in our community. We know that a housing unit alone will not be the solution to end homelessness for many, and that supports are required for citizens to be become successful and contributing back into the community. We need property development that is poised to serve all individuals requiring affordable housing. Not for profits are able to do this, while still contributing to our economy through construction and redevelopment, and social enterprise. Governments have strived to put programs and funding in place that attract private development of affordable housing, but it is not attractive enough to meet demand in the present market where developers and owners are in a position to be very profitable. Development of affordable housing remains very attractive for Not for Profits as our business plan is not limited to profits but long term sustainability, and the recovery of those we serve. Recovery creates movement in a housing system, and movement creates opportunities for all those looking for housing. Direct more funding and opportunities to those that are experts in providing Affordable Supportive Housing in our community.

I hope that any long term decisions by City Council are not made prior to receiving and considering the considerable amount of input from stakeholder feedback and recommendations in the Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan Update. I encourage city council to take the risk needed to lead with innovation and to do things differently for the sake of resolving our present housing crisis and so that our future community is not faced with the same issues.

CMHA Middlesex is available to provide support, collaboration, and implementation of innovative solutions in moving forward with all willing partners.

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