

Spectrum of Transitional Housing

January 12, 2020

Dear chair and CAPSC members,

There is a spectrum of transitional housing options, and we are missing some potentially valuable elements in that spectrum. I want to suggest some options that were discussed in a meeting with staff that was arranged by our chair, Councillor Lewis.

Transitional housing with an agricultural connection

Having transitional housing located where people can participate in growing food has been requested, recommended and proven to be helpful. It would be worthwhile for us to identify properties in the city where this could take place.

Conestoga Huts as the pre-apartment dwelling

Much less expensive than tiny homes are Conestoga Huts. These 60 square foot dwellings look like a covered wagon and cost around \$1000 to build. They have a lockable front door, a rear window and a small porch. With room for a bed and storage inside, they make a more attractive home than a tent. We can provide them with unit numbers so that the residents can be considered to have a fixed address while they wait for other housing options to open up.

Large temporary structure as a workshop

Toronto has erected some large temporary structures (60' x 100') to house approximately 100 people. I envision using one of these buildings as a mess hall, community centre and workshop where the Conestoga Huts are constructed and located nearby. It can contain washrooms, shower facilities and serve as a focal point for providing services. The cost for such a structure is in the area of \$2.5 M.

A campground is better than a tent city

While people wait for a Conestoga Hut to be built for them, we should provide a suitable place to pitch a tent. Though I have heard of many problems associated with a tent city, I have not experienced problems the many times I have stayed in a campground. I think we can modify this format to make the lowest end of the transitional housing spectrum more effective and motivate individuals to set up camp there while they wait for better options.

We can provide secure campsites

We can create a campground with sites spaced comfortably apart from each other with trees planted in between. For \$600 in materials, each site can have a 4m by 6.5m fenced section to contain the tent with a lockable gate and a unit number so that resident will no longer have no-fixed-address. Another \$400 would provide a lockable metal chest for storing valuables securely. Washrooms would be close at hand.

All this for under \$3M

Fifty secure campsites would cost \$50k with an additional \$50k for installation if volunteer help could not be secured. Fifty Conestoga huts would have approximately the same cost. With the large temporary structure coming in at \$2.5 million it is conceivable that this could all be constructed for \$3M with some funds left over for the agricultural portion of the project.

Motion to search for a site

Whether or not we attempt to fill in the spectrum of transitional housing with these exact options, I would like us to begin looking for places where a robust solution can be established. For this reason, I ask support for the following motion:

That staff identify properties where campsites, Conestoga Huts and a large temporary structure could be located on or near an agricultural property.

Sincerely,

Michael van Holst
Ward 1 Councillor