



Neighbourhood Legal Services

LONDON AND MIDDLESEX

May 27, 2022

Community and Protective Services Committee
City of London
300 Dufferin Ave
London, ON N6B 1Z2

By email cpssc@london.ca

Re: May 31, 2022 Agenda Item – Canada Ontario Community Housing Initiative Housing (COCHI) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)

Dear Committee Members:

Neighbourhood Legal Services is a poverty law clinic assisting low income Ontarians who reside in London and Middlesex County with legal issues in the areas of social assistance, landlord/tenant and precarious employment. As such, we are highly aware of the difficulties that low income Ontarians encounter.

We assist tenants who are facing eviction at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Over the last year our clinic has seen a large increase in evictions for reasons of “own use”, conversion of property, and for renovations (sometimes called “renovictions”). In most cases, these landlords are acting in questionable faith in an attempt to simply raise rent for the new tenants, or to sell the property for new investors who will raise the rent to new tenants.

Although the Residential Tenancies Act provides that tenants who move out for renovations have a right of first refusal to move back in at the same rent, many of these landlords change the layout of the units just enough to argue that the former unit no longer exists, thus nullifying this right.

We have been keeping anecdotal records of the N13s our office has assisted with since last fall and believe that over 400 relatively affordable units have been lost in London since last September.

These developments stem from the overheated real estate market in our City that has seen property values skyrocket and the average cost of rental housing double over the past few years, while wages have stagnated and social housing rates have barely budged in a decade.

Hundreds of tenants are losing affordable units due to these evictions. Due to the current London rental market these tenants are unable to find a new rental unit anywhere near the rent they were paying. This causes extreme financial hardship for many of these tenants and homelessness for some.

Various agencies in London that serve this community, including ourselves, have been able to assist these tenants to obtain housing supplements to cover the difference between what they can afford to pay for shelter and the actual current market cost of housing. However, the number of housing supplement spots available are extremely limited and in no way come close to meeting the need/demand for housing supplements.

We wholeheartedly support the City of London's commitment to building new affordable housing and to repair our current, dated, social housing stock. We know that this work will take time and money to complete. The problem is that we have an urgent need now for rental housing assistance now, either in the form of rent supplements or housing allowances, to keep low income Londoners from becoming homeless. Simply put; many people cannot afford to pay "market" rent in London, and when they are evicted through no fault of their own, they have no place to go. Furthermore, we know that homelessness puts an additional strain on other social and health care services in our community.

We are delighted to learn that you were notified on April 27, 2022 that the City will be receiving \$5,750,152.00 in funding from COCHI and OPHI. However, we have noted that \$5,112,716.00 will be allocated to new building and repairs and we are concerned that your proposal only devotes \$150,000 to Housing Supplements.

Another report before you today outlines that in 2021 Housing Allowances supported approximately 432 households, and that the Municipal Housing Community Housing Bridge allowances only supported 11 new households and 57 households, with additional support to 21 households as part of the Anti-Trafficking program initiative.

We are unclear as to how the new budget relates to the milestones established in 2021, but it appears to be unlikely that the increasing level of support needed can be maintained in 2022 with only \$150,000.00 devoted to it.

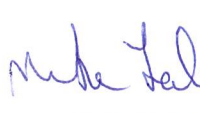
Our experience is that there is an urgent need to expand housing supports such as rent supplements and allowances. These funds are crucial right now to prevent homelessness in this city.

We understand the need to balance investing in future affordable housing and maintaining our housing stock with providing these subsidies. **We are asking that a larger portion of the program funding be allocated to housing supplements.** The need for an increase in housing supplements could not be more urgent. Many tenants are facing eviction right now and they do not have the time to wait until new affordable units are built.

Thank you for your anticipated review of our request.

Yours truly,


Kristie Pagnielo
Executive Director


Mike Laliberte
Staff Lawyer


Theresa Kiefer
Housing Support Worker