

June 25, 2018

Subject: Expropriation of 230 Sherbourne St., and adjacent vacant lot.

To Mayor John Tory and Members of the Affordable Housing Committee:

We are concerned agencies, advocates and community groups that provide individual services and supports to poor and homeless people in the downtown east. As you are well aware, the city is in the midst of a housing and shelter crisis. In the downtown east, this crisis is further exacerbated by an alarming intensification of gentrification, a process displacing community members from the neighbourhood through the loss of affordable housing in the area, the closure of rooming houses, an overall lack of subsidized and supportive housing and ever inadequate social assistance and ODSP rates.

We are aware that properties at the southwest corner of Dundas and Sherbourne, including 230 Sherbourne street, were put up for sale for potential condo development. The corner of Dundas and Sherbourne is an important part of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, at present, more than 50 people sleep on mats in the All Saints Church at the corner as they cannot access shelter or housing on a nightly basis. Just blocks away, over 100 people sleep on mats at the George Street respite centre. Shelters are at nearly 100% capacity across most of the sectors each and every night, and wait times for rent geared to income housing exceed ten years with nearly 100,000 households presently on the waitlist.

Given the homelessness crisis across the city and the rapid pace of gentrification in the downtown east, we are asking the City to take action around the property at 230 Sherbourne Street. We are aware that a motion was passed in March that directs City staff to look into purchasing or expropriating this plot of land and that a report from staff is expected at the Affordable Housing Committee on June 25, 2018. In the face of the severity and depth of homelessness in this community, expropriation of this site is a necessary response to ensure the development of truly affordable, subsidized and supportive housing units in the community that will never be possible in private development.

Expropriation has been utilized by the City to secure properties on several occasions, including most recently to purchase properties on George Street, and to buy the building that houses the City-run Birkdale Residence for women. The current crisis of homelessness requires the consideration of measures such as expropriation in order to ensure that community members have access to safe housing.

We look forward to your timely response in this matter.

Sincerely,

The undersigned:

1. Street Health
2. Sanctuary Toronto
3. Regent Park Community Health Centre
4. Sistering
5. Fred Victor
6. Mainstay Housing
7. Inner City Family Health Team
8. Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services
9. LOFT Community Services
10. Sherbourne Health Centre
11. St. Jude Community Homes
12. 416 Community Support for Women
13. Health Providers Against Poverty
14. Neighbourhood Legal Services
15. Sound Times
16. The Neighbourhood Group
17. Peace Builders
18. Young Street Mission
19. The Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness
20. Rev'd Maggie Helwid, Rector, Church of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields
21. Neighbourhood Information Post
22. Centre for Community Learning & Development
23. Faith in the City
24. S.E.A.S. Centre (Support Enhance Access Services Centre)
25. Toronto Kiwanis Boys & Girls Clubs
26. Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre
27. Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario