

**City Council, Standing Committee and Commission
Conseil, comités permanents et commission**

Motion

Notice of Motion / Avis de motion

City Council / Conseil Municipal

Item / Article:

Re: **Affordable Housing and Homelessness Emergency**

Moved by / Motion de: Councillor C. McKenney

Seconded by / Appuyée par:

WHEREAS the City of Ottawa prides itself as being a caring and compassionate city and continually strives to be a place where people want to live, work and play; and

WHEREAS providing access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing for everyone is fundamental to achieving that goal; and

WHEREAS in 1976 Canada signed onto the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which included labour, health care, and education rights, as well as rights to an adequate standard of living; and

WHEREAS on June 21, 2019, the Federal government enshrined housing as a right as part of the National Housing Strategy; and

WHEREAS the City of Ottawa has made investments in an effort to reduce chronic homelessness and increase the affordable housing supply; and

WHEREAS in 2019, these investments included \$15 million in capital funding for new affordable housing and \$111 million for operating and repair funding for community housing, housing subsidies, support services, and various housing and homelessness initiatives; and

WHEREAS despite these investments, in June 2019 the mid-point review of the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan reported that:

- **42% of renters spend more than 30% or more of their pre-tax income to pay the median rent for local housing that is adequate, affordable and suitable**
- **at an average of \$1,174 for all bedroom apartment types (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation rental Market reports, 2018), Ottawa has the third highest rents for a major urban centre in Ontario**
- **the number of households on the Centralized Waiting list for affordable housing has increased by a staggering 14.8% from 2017 and is now over 12,000 households**
- **the overall rate of emergency shelter use has increased by 6.5% in the past**

year to a total of 7,937 individuals accessing emergency shelters in the city with the increase driven by a significant rise in the numbers of women (5.5%) and families (10.6%) using shelters

- in terms of chronic and episodic homelessness, significant increases were recorded amongst single men (10.8% and 5.6%), and amongst families (13.7% for chronic homelessness)**

WHEREAS according to census data Indigenous people account for 2.5% of Ottawa's population yet 25% of people experiencing homelessness in Ottawa identified as indigenous; and

WHEREAS people living in shelters are part of the crisis and not the solution; and

WHEREAS it is estimated that approximately 92 people are sleeping outside in Ottawa; and

WHEREAS since April 1st of this year, 698 women and their children who fled domestic violence were turned away from VAW shelters with few options for safe shelter often returning to unsafe circumstances; and

WHEREAS these statistics clearly indicate that our current plan and Federal and Provincial funding levels are not sufficient to provide adequate housing for all or to eliminate chronic homelessness in our city; and

WHEREAS the Province through the Housing Services Act requires the City to submit an updated 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan by December 31, 2019 that reflects the needs and priorities of the community; and

WHEREAS the success of the Plan is dependent on a commitment of sustained and increased funding from all levels of government to address the issues of housing insecurity and homelessness in Ottawa; and

WHEREAS the needs of the community far outweigh the City's available resources and funding required to effectively address this issue and desperately needs the support of both the Provincial and Federal governments;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Ottawa officially declare an Affordable Housing and Homelessness Emergency, acknowledging that the City of Ottawa does not possess the resources to manage this crisis alone and that Council must call on the Provincial and Federal governments to assist us by providing the City with an immediate increase in emergency funding for housing, housing supports, and housing allowances, as well as a long-term financial plan to meet the needs of the community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT through the update to our 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, staff provide City Council with what it will take to implement more aggressive targets and a framework for action, in order to:

- **Preserve and increase the affordable housing supply**
- **Increase access to housing affordability**
- **Prevent the occurrence of homelessness and eliminate by 100% chronic homelessness by 2024 with a special emphasis on Indigenous homelessness**
- **Ensure people are supported to achieve housing stability and long-term housing retention; and**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to develop a long range financial plan to meet the targets as set out in the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to consider the feasibility of the expropriation of buildings left unused and vacant for conversion to mixed income housing and/or supportive housing as part of the Empty Building Bylaw Review; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff review and report back to the appropriate Standing Committee and Council on the steps needed for the City to establish a Land Trust to protect publicly-owned lands, including those identified by staff as appropriate for the development of affordable housing near rapid transit.