



September 2020

Dear Toronto Members of Parliament:

As Members of Parliament representing Toronto ridings, you know the critical need for affordable and supportive housing in our city. Toronto has Canada's largest population experiencing homelessness, the lowest supply of affordable housing and the highest percentage of working-age adults living in poverty. Our housing crisis is necessarily and inextricably a health crisis, one heavily inflected by inequities of racialization, gender, income and employment and by migration history. As health professionals, we know that housing is one of the most potent medicines available.

There is nothing inevitable about this city's housing crisis. It is now time for a bold and effective prescription to stabilize the crisis today and begin establishing a durable recovery for tomorrow. Our craft, like yours, commits us to the complex and difficult public service needed to support our communities to weather, recover and grow stronger through our present adversity. So let us work together to bring about a healthy recovery for all.

The foundation of this crisis couldn't be clearer. Our city's supply of affordable housing has been in decline for decades - long before COVID. Between 2006 and 2016, the city lost over 120,000 units with monthly rents of under \$1000 while its population continued its steep incline. Over the same period, income growth stalled while rents for vacant units increased by 63 percent. As a result, almost half of Toronto's 525,000-plus renter households must spend over 30 percent, and a quarter of them more than 50 percent, of their monthly gross income on rent. People in this city endure impossibly long and growing waitlists for social and supportive housing -- 109,000 and 18,000 households respectively.

All this has made Toronto fertile ground for evictions over the years. The recent cessation of the COVID eviction moratorium, combined with the health and economic burden of COVID on low-income and racialized residents, will only accelerate evictions. This will drive up homelessness rates just as the city braces for a second wave of COVID still reeling from the economic, housing and health crises of the first.

We are deeply concerned that serious avoidable harm will befall our city and its most vulnerable residents over the coming months unless the federal government takes bold, decisive and immediate action to stabilize the crisis.

Toronto needs immediate federal funding to acquire housing for everyone who is now homeless, or about to become so, and to ensure that those who have been temporarily sheltered throughout this pandemic are provided with permanent, affordable and supportive housing. As the crisis stabilizes, the federal government must ensure a durable recovery by ending homelessness and housing insecurity once and for all. This more complicated goal demands broad vision and leadership and requires concerted, coordinated efforts, embracing income security, housing development and construction, regulatory frameworks and recognition of distinct rights.

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness has put forward a plan, Recovery for All, that pulls on all those levers. With its ambition to build permanent, affordable and supportive housing and curtail

financialization of rental markets, Recovery For All is as much about health and well-being as it is about housing – as it must be to succeed. We are asking for your commitment to champion this comprehensive plan as a central focus for the September 23rd speech from the throne.

Toronto needs your help, urgently. It needs a housing acquisition fund now to avert the worst outcomes for the growing number of individuals and families on the brink of homelessness and for those already experiencing it. To realize a durable and meaningful recovery, we need Recovery For All. As our city's representatives in parliament, we look to you to lead the way and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Dr. Andrew Bond

Medical Director, Inner City Health Associates

Co-Chair, Canadian Network for the Health and Housing of People Experiencing Homelessness (CNH3)

CC: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.

The Honourable Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Official Opposition, P.C., M.P.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, M.P.

Ms. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada, M.P.

Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto

Councillors, City of Toronto

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