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Ontario NDP Caucus • Groupe parlementaire du NPD de l'Ontario

Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

November 25, 2022

Dear Premier Ford,

Re: Ontario needs a plan to address the growing homelessness crisis

Toronto has a homelessness crisis, and it's getting worse. The cost of food and housing is high and rising fast. Food bank use has increased by 300%, and shelters are consistently at 100% capacity. The hotels that were used by the city for temporary housing during the pandemic are ending their leases, and there is nowhere for their occupants to go.

Homelessness is a complex social issue. It requires a strong commitment from all orders of government, ministries, departments, community agencies, individuals, families, friends, and neighbours to both prevent people from becoming homeless, and helping people who are homeless find housing and live good healthy lives. What is also very clear is that any meaningful measure to end homelessness will be ineffective unless we find people permanent homes that meet their needs.

In December 2021, the Auditor General stated the Ford government "has no plan to reduce or prevent homelessness". We are concerned that not only has the government not made a plan over the past year but is making the homelessness crisis worse.

During this legislative session, the government has:

- Cut \$85 million from homelessness programs compared to what it spent last year
- Cut the \$1000 development fee per unit that municipalities use for housing services
- Made it easier for developers to permanently evict tenants and convert affordable rental housing into luxury condos in Bill 23. This alarming move will lead to a loss of thousands of affordable rentals, more evictions, and homelessness.

Everyone should be able to live in a home they can afford that meets their needs. That's our goal. That is why we are calling on the government to develop and release a plan to reduce and prevent homelessness this winter, and end homelessness by 2025.

Ontario NDP Caucus Services

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This plan should include:

- A homes-first strategy that includes quickly buying privately owned buildings and converting them to affordable homes. The purchase of 877 Yonge to convert to a supportive living facility is a good example of what can be achieved quickly.
- Establishing a public builder to finance and build 250,000 affordable homes on public land at cost. The City of Toronto's Housing Now program to build 10,000 homes on city land is an excellent program the province should support and scale-up.
- Increase funding to maintain Toronto Community Housing.
- Increase funding to the Social Services Relief Fund program to help the city provide housing to people in need.
- Increase the rent supplement program to help 311,000 households pay their rent.
- Bring in vacancy control and strong renter protections to stabilize rental prices and keep affordable private-market housing.
- Double social assistance rates so people in poverty can afford to pay rent.

This is not an exhaustive list. We urge the Ontario government to respond to the homelessness crisis with the urgency and care that is required. We want to work with you. We need you to have a plan.

Yours,

Jessica Bell
MPP for University Rosedale

Chris Glover
MPP Spadina-Fort York

Chandra Pasma
Ottawa West - Napean

Kristyn Wong-Tam
MPP Toronto Centre

Cc:

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steven Clark
Minister of Health Sylvia Jones
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services Merrilee Fullerton
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Michael Tibollo

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