
Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

TDRC urges amendments to proposed Toronto homelessness strategy:

We are asking all groups making deputations to Toronto City Council's Policy and Finance Committee on Wednesday, January 19, 2005 to include the following recommendations for amendments in their remarks:

First, drop the proposed ban on "camping" at Nathan Phillips Square.

Criminalizing homelessness is costly (in policing and related costs), it is inhumane and illegal (a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by unfairly targeting one group of people based on their status), and it is ineffective (places like New York City have rejected policing policies in favour of subsidized housing).

Second, commit at least an additional \$14.2 million in city dollars for new social (subsidized) housing to match the \$14.2 million in re-allocated dollars.

The strategy, as proposed by staff, only re-allocates existing resources and finally commits housing dollars that were first promised in 2000.

Third, create city-community committee to ensure delivery of new homes. The City of Toronto has failed in delivering new truly affordable homes in recent years. The strategy, as proposed by staff, doesn't offer any new mechanism to break the logjam at City Hall.

Fourth, set the year one target at 3,000 truly affordable new homes. The targets for new housing in the strategy fall far short of the desperate need for new social (subsidized) homes in Toronto.

Fifth, amend the street outreach strategy to make sure that temporary beds that will be lost in the spring are replaced and to effectively support existing outreach services. Toronto will lose the beds at the Edward Street shelter in the spring, along with Out of the Cold beds. There needs to be a plan now to replace those beds, along with plans for additional support to existing outreach initiatives.

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