

May 22, 2024

Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
570-2525 Old Bronte Road
Oakville, ON L6M 4J2

Dear Ms. Triantafilopoulos,

CFUW is a self-funded, national organization of over 6,600 women whose mission is “to achieve educational and economic equality and social justice through continuous learning and empowerment”. Advocacy on significant issues of importance for the wellbeing of Canadians, and women in particular, is fundamental to the work of CFUW.

CFUW Burlington is writing to express its concern regarding the lack of progress on the construction of affordable housing in Ontario. In the 1980’s and early 1990’s, non-profit housing developments were conceived, approved, and constructed with a mix of government funding at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Those “hey days” are long gone; however, given the state of – or lack of – affordable housing today, those hey days need to be revived – now.

According to Rory Nisan, Co-Chair of the Ontario Coalition for the Rights of Homeless People (and also the Deputy Mayor of the City of Burlington), “research consistently shows that the cost of homelessness driven by emergency shelters, hospital visits, and justice system interactions ranges from \$50,000-\$60,000 per person annually, while the cost of providing permanent supportive housing with wraparound services is much lower - \$26,000 per year”. While housing is a provincial responsibility, Ontario is the only province where responsibility for ‘social’ housing has been shifted to municipalities. These costs – totalling \$2.1 billion in 2024 – are borne by Ontario municipalities.

Furthermore, according to a recent study released by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, more than 80,000 Ontarians were KNOWN to be homeless in 2024 – an increase of 25% since 2022. The existence of tent encampments is clear evidence of this. Refugees, Indigenous Peoples, and Youth are the most disproportionately affected, and the rate of homelessness is growing faster in rural and Northern Ontario communities than elsewhere.

While there have been recent provincial investments in homelessness (e.g., \$50M for affordable housing, \$20M for additional shelter, and \$378M for HART hubs), these funds are a tiny fraction (between 2% and 6%) of what is really needed to end chronic homelessness.

Ontario needs a significant infusion of funding now to address this untenable situation, and such funding needs to be funneled into non-profit housing agencies who will build the necessary affordable housing. Private developers have been sitting on 10s of thousands of approved housing lots/units for years because they do not see the profitability of building in this current market. Non-profits do not focus on profit margins – they focus on meeting the needs of their clients – providing safe and affordable housing – with support services as needed.

Is your government making the necessary investments to ensure that there is affordable housing for all Ontarians who need it? If so, please share your comprehensive strategy in this regard.

Sincerely,

Ruth Levkoe, President
CFUW Burlington