



March 10, 2021

Regional Municipality of York
9325 Yonge St,
Richmond Hill ON
L4C 0A8

Subject: Support Housing Rent Supplement Support for Individuals who live on a Provincial Housing Allowance, and Receive Healthcare Supports

York Region Clerk and Councillors,

We face an unprecedented situation with the COVID-19 pandemic; thank you for your leadership and service throughout. I am writing to discuss supportive housing for individuals who live on a provincial housing allowance. More specifically, in support of Reena's request for Rent Supplements for the Lou Fruitman Reena Residence and the development of a fair and equitable process to deliver rent supplements to individuals who rely on healthcare supports and provincial subsidies.

Over the past decade, it has become evident that housing is a crucial component of an individual's health and quality of life. Housing is increasingly important for our clients who face physical and developmental disabilities or medical complexities. Safehaven sites in Aurora and Vaughan are home to many individuals across the GTA who have complex care needs and are supported through provincial allowances such as Ontario Works, ODSP and Healthcare funds: **this is simply not enough.**

As part of our mission to serve a complex population facing a housing crisis, Safehaven is proud to partner with Reena to open the Lou Fruitman Reena Residence. Safehaven is supporting the transition of 14 young adults into the facility in Summer/Fall 2021. Many of the individuals who will occupy these units receive their funding from provincial healthcare supports. ODSP shelter rates and baseline funding only cover 60-80% of an average market rent cost depending on the clients' needs and unit. Clients' personal allowance and the remainder of their supports have to cover the cost of living, eating, and personal growth and development – it is an unlivable wage.

While working to forward the three goals within the York Region Housing Plan, we urge you to consider expanding the supports in place for persons with disabilities looking to access housing through an increased income or a top-up payment system.

York Region's plan details three steps:

1. *Increase the supply of affordable and rental housing.*
2. *Help people find and keep housing.*
3. *Strengthen the housing and homelessness system.*

Increasing the supply of housing at an affordable market rate is a bold start, but we must continue to strengthen these individuals' support to ensure that our goal for healthy housing is sustainable. By investing in an additional rent supplement, York Region emboldens an



individual's quality of life, encourages them to socialize and participate in the economy, grows their independence, and lives a life beyond barriers.

We look forward to maintaining an open dialogue with York Region as they seek to create sustainable and intentional communities in the weeks, months and years to come. Thank you for your leadership. Please let us know if there is anything more to contribute to further protecting the Developmental Sector's exceptional clients and the employees who care for them.

Thank you in advance,

Susan Bisaillon, CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Bisaillon", written in a cursive style.

Safehaven

Cc: Wayne Emmerson, Chair, York Region

The Honourable Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua, City of Vaughan

The Honourable Mayor Tom Mrakas, City of Aurora

Gino Rosati, Regional Councillor, City of Vaughan

Linda Jackson, Regional Councillor, City of Vaughan