



# PARKDALE FOOD CENTRE NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR

May 11th, 2020

**Attn: Councillor Jann Harder, Planning Committee Chair**

While our City Council prepares to vote on the urban boundary extension, our elected representatives must make their decision on how this will impact Ottawa's most vulnerable residents. The boundary extension, and resulting suburban sprawl, will have an adverse impact on Ottawa's affordable housing, homelessness, and social services for decades to come.

As a food centre and City of Ottawa agency, the Parkdale Food Centre team is constantly meeting people grappling with the real life effects of municipal policy. While our city leaders fail to build enough affordable housing, we have neighbours bouncing from shelter to shelter - with many spending nights on the streets. Due to a lack of social housing for families, our city places homeless families in cramped and derelict motel rooms - without their own basic kitchen - for years on end. And when many of our neighbours can't put food on the table, in part due to skyrocketing rental prices, they are forced to depend on food charities in order to survive.

Extending the urban boundary will stretch our services and infrastructure to an untenable point, weaken our social safety net, and trap people further into the cycle of poverty. As an organization running a food bank, we know this isn't morally right.

Moreover, it is fundamentally unjust to adopt policies without adequate consultation of equity-seeking groups. Detrimental housing policies place a disproportionate strain on marginalized communities, including people living in poverty, racialized communities, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and women. With Ontario Works and Disability paying rates far below the poverty line, we know that the state of housing in Ottawa rising to a fever pitch will greatly impact marginalized communities.

The act of extending the urban boundary, especially without radically transforming our housing policies, will push low-income residents further away from transit and social services while stretching city

infrastructure past its limits. To rectify this situation, today we join our partner agency, the Somerset West Community Health Centre, in proposing the following steps to alleviate poverty in Ottawa.

The Ottawa City Council must adopt the following measures:

- 1) Pass a strong citywide inclusionary zoning by-law that ensures 25% of new development is dedicated to affordable housing and places a special emphasis on deeply affordable housing within 1 km of rapid transit stations;
- 2) Ensure that all available government-owned land within 1 km of current & future rapid transit stations is used for non-profit and co-op housing (and that the City provide land to the newly established Land Trust in Ottawa specifically for affordable housing near rapid transit);
- 3) The City of Ottawa should commit at least \$20 million/year of City funding, over and above federal and provincial grants, to build new affordable housing near rapid transit stations

Each council vote that touches housing policy provides us with the chance to build a city that is working towards ending poverty - or slip further away from this goal. And with the sky-high rental prices in our city, we can't afford to wait any longer. In 2020, it's past time for our City Council to respect that housing is a human right.

Regards,

Karen Secord, Executive Director of the Parkdale Food Centre

Deb Abbott, Chair of the Parkdale Food Centre Board of Directors

Cc Mayor Jim Watson