

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Planning and Growth Management Committee.

My name is Barney Savage. I am the director of public policy at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, or CAMH. CAMH is the largest mental health and addictions facility in Canada – a teaching hospital fully affiliated with the University of Toronto. Our central clinical and research facilities are located in downtown Toronto, and we have 26 satellite offices across Ontario.

CAMH is here today to stress the importance of supportive housing for people who live with mental health problems, and to urge the committee to categorically reject any land use restrictions that constitute discrimination against people who require supportive housing. This includes land use separation requirements.

We agree with the Ontario Human Rights Commission contention that zoning bylaws should be deemed invalid if their purpose is to regulate the user, as opposed to the use of the land. We support our partners in the Homecoming Community Choice Coalition and the Dream Team: zoning provisions with the effect of discriminating against the type of user are inappropriate, and unacceptable.

Supportive housing changes lives. Members of the Dream Team can provide testimony to this. From the CAMH perspective, we can also say that supportive housing is a critical component of an improved system of care for people with mental illness.

CAMH provides specialized mental health and addiction clinical services, with a focus on clinical research and improving the quality of care. The inability to find housing for our clients extends the length of hospital stay unnecessarily, and results in the call for greater inpatient capacity. It increases health care costs, and does not provide for an optimal quality of life.

We know that a high quality service for those affected by schizophrenia and other mental illnesses treats people at home or as close to home as possible, and includes family as allies. We understand that psychological, physical and social care are all needed to offer people the care and hope to empower and support them on their recovery journey.

We know that there are people in hospital beds who could be better accommodated in the community. We know from recent experience that people who have lived in hospital for years can live in the community, with support.

We should be doing everything we can to support an increased supply of supportive housing units in our community. The City of Toronto should be actively facilitating the development of supportive housing units.

Unfortunately, there is a history of planning processes being deployed against supportive housing. Often these are expensive barriers, requiring extensive legal and administrative processes that can delay and disrupt projects.

Those who live with mental health and addiction problems tell us that confronting the stigma of mental health and addictions is one of the most significant barriers to recovery. Stigma treats *persons* as *problems*. Stigma against persons with mental health and addictions is rooted in our history. Its most notable physical manifestation in Toronto is what is left of the walls that surrounded the Toronto Lunatic Asylum, now the primary campus of CAMH. Those walls were built to separate the mentally ill from the rest of society. They reinforced the exclusion of the mentally ill – from their families and communities.

Today, we recognize that one in five of us will encounter a mental health problem, and that mental illness is encountered in our schools, our workplaces, all over our communities.

The City of Toronto has supported the plan to transform the CAMH's Queen Street site – to use urban design and land use planning to help integrate the treatment of mental illness and addictions into the local neighbourhood. The City of Toronto should show the same commitment to the inclusion of people with mental health problems by ensuring that its land use planning rejects barriers to supportive housing for people with mental health and other disabilities – wherever they live in our city.

Thank you very much.