

Toronto Developmental Services Alliance



Forum Report



About the TDSA

Toronto Developmental Services Alliance (TDSA) is a voluntary organization comprised of 27 Developmental Services agencies that focus primarily on advocacy, information sharing and developing innovative services and practices that respond to the emerging needs and interests of people with a developmental disability. Collectively, the TDSA serves thousands of individuals and families living in the City of Toronto, the GTA and beyond.

Various members of the TDSA were facing similar issues within their agencies maintaining, accessing and developing housing opportunities for the people they serve. These issues are often not agency-based, but part of a larger societal issue which creates barriers for people with a developmental disability accessing affordable and supportive housing. The TDSA formed a Housing Sub-Committee in February 2016 to address these issues and examine the critical shortage of affordable housing (rental and ownership) options available for people with a developmental disability.

The intention of the Housing Sub-Committee is to work together with relevant partners to create new and innovative housing solutions, to ensure that the needs of this population remains an important focus moving forward. The hopes are to have both the short and long-term housing needs of individuals with a developmental disability be addressed through these new and innovative solutions, so that they have the ability to choose where they live and have the ability to live a full life within their communities.

The TDSA held their third Housing Forum on November 30, 2018, where various speakers presented on the issue of affordable and supportive housing. Following these presentations, a panel discussion was held, and attendees engaged with the presenters in a dialogue around affordable and supportive housing. This report provides a summary of the Housing Forum presentations and the dialogue that was held during the panel discussion.

Members of the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee

Antoniet Orlando (Meta Centre), Arthur Mathews (The Salvation Army Broadview Village), Bryan Keshen (Reena), Ebenezer Rajeevan (Christian Horizons), Frances MacNeil (Community Living Toronto), Paul Bruce (Cota), Raphael Arens (L'Arche), Shay Johnson (Housing Navigator), Susan Bisailon (Safehaven) and Tullio Orlando (Montage Support Services)





Recap from 2017 TDSA Housing Forum

Much of the work the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee focused on for the 2018 year was driven by the TDSA Housing Forum that was held in 2017. The 2017 TDSA Housing Forum focused on conversations regarding various challenges for people with a developmental disability to obtain adequate housing, and [this Forum Report is currently available on the TDSA website.](#)

3 Important Themes that Emerged

Affordability: The issue of affordable housing is largely based on income levels. Many people with a developmental disability rely on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) as their main source of income. The maximum monthly payment is approximately \$1,110 or \$13,320 a year, which is well below the income levels considered by the City of Toronto. The ODSP shelter allowance of approximately \$489 per month is not enough for individuals to access affordable housing that is based on current Average Market Rent (AMR) rates, as the cost of these units cost more than the allotted amount for shelter.

Alignment of Housing and Supports: People with a developmental disability require access to affordable housing and access to appropriate and individualized supports together at the same time. Because of this, they cannot access affordable housing through the channels that are currently being offered.

Developmental Services Sector-Specific Challenges: Developmental Services agencies face unique challenges when trying to provide housing for the individuals they support. For example, zoning guidelines and fire code legislation further complicate 3 or more people living together with 24/7 supports in a building, limiting their choices within community. Furthermore, Developmental Services agencies do not have additional housing capacity for individuals when they receive residential funding for supports through the Ministry.

Recommendations Made by TDSA

- Individuals and families to have more options for support
- Allow for more realistically affordable options
- Access/create more capital funding for new developments
- Have more committed operating funds to help secure future housing opportunities

TDSA Housing Work for 2018

This year the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee has focused on sharing information about Developmental Services Sector-Specific Challenges to make community members aware of the need and the ask from our sector when it comes to affordable housing.

TDSA Housing Sub-Committee Work Plan

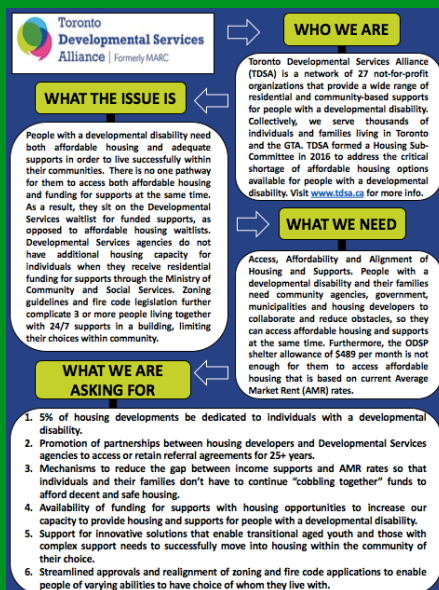
Community Engagement & Relationship Building

- Engage in community events to have more TDSA representation in discussions regarding affordable housing
- The successful completion of the TDSA 2018 Housing Forum
- Development of a list of local MPPs/local City Councillors and which TDSA agencies are located within their catchment. This is an important part of the relationship building and knowing who local contacts are to discuss new and upcoming housing opportunities

5%

Supporting Inclusive Housing

- Working with Evergreen Housing Action Lab to develop materials for a Socially Inclusive Housing Design which ideally will be considered when designing future builds



Information Sharing

- The creation of a one-page flyer outlining TDSA key housing issues, needs and requests
- Maintaining the TDSA website, ensuring all housing related information is kept up to date. A family resources section was added to help provide more information to families in order to bridge more options for support
- Collection of TDSA housing-related data to know where TDSA member agencies stand in terms of accessing affordable housing

Why the 5% Ask?

People with a developmental disability need both affordable housing and adequate supports in order to live successfully within their communities. There is no one pathway for them to access both affordable housing and funding for supports at the same time. As a result, they sit on the Developmental Services waitlist for funded supports, as opposed to affordable housing waitlists.

TDSA is proposing that 5% of housing developments be dedicated to individuals with a developmental disability. This would greatly benefit individuals as they typically do not navigate the housing landscape like other citizens.



TDSA Member Agencies Housing Data

The following is a summary of housing data that was collected from TDSA member agencies:

- **950+ years** of combined knowledge
- Providing housing & housing supports to **2,100+ individuals**
 - Mainly in congregate living settings, rental apartments, family owned homes
 - Some individuals are housed through treatment beds, shelters, long-term care homes
- TDSA agencies hoping to access over **280+ housing units**
- **6+ agencies** within the next year
- **13+ agencies** within the next 3-5 years
 - Agencies looking to access rental apartments (bachelor – 3+ bedrooms), owning homes with 2-4+ bedrooms, condos
- Agencies must manage **various risks** when accessing housing opportunities
 - Operational costs
 - Zoning, fire code applications, by-laws
 - Recruitment and retention of skilled staff

Housing Forum Presentations

Below is a summary of the presentations that took place during the Housing Forum. A copy of the presentations are available on the TDSA website at www.tdsa.ca and can be downloaded for personal reference.



The Toronto
Developmental Service
Alliance

Housing crisis it only gets
worse.... Part II

Bryan Keshen – President & CEO, Reena, TDSA Housing Sub-Committee Member

Bryan's presentation focused on why the message of advocating for 5% of new affordable housing be designated specifically for people with a developmental disability is so significant.

Bryan covered the "three abilities of housing." First, affordability: not a lot of individuals with a developmental disability are able to participate in the employment market, making it difficult to afford the increasing costs of rental units. Second, supportability: having in-home supports for individuals is critical to maintaining successful housing, therefore future builds must incorporate designs that can meet the complex support needs of individuals. Lastly, accessibility: individuals need to not only have accessible housing, but need to be accessible to their communities through nearby transportation, employment and social spaces.

Developmental Services agencies must start thinking about options of providing housing to their clients, as agencies need to meet their clients where they are currently at. The National Housing Strategy is providing some positive opportunities to access funding for housing, but it is important for agencies to continue to gather and collect their own housing related data. This will signify the importance of continuing to advocate for individuals with a developmental disability at every opportunity possible.

Michele McMaster – Toronto Affordable Housing Consultant, Ontario Affordable Housing Centre - Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC)

Michele recognized that the current housing system is “stuck” and needs to change its current way of thinking in order to keep up with the adapting needs of the population. There needs to be more opportunities to access money and funds for creative housing projects. There also needs to be more examination done at every stage of accessing housing, to ensure that every step has room for change and opportunity.

It is an exciting time for housing, with the National Housing Strategy having completed its first year of existence. There continues to be more opportunities for funding coming into the sector. Michele described CMHC’s “big hairy audacious goal” that by 2030, everyone in Canada will have the housing they need and ensuring that all citizens have the right type of housing. She encouraged anyone to reach out to her directly if they have any questions or comments they would like to share.

Michele took time to talk about different funding opportunities that are available. The non-profit sector may find Seed Funding beneficial as it is very expensive to build housing. This funding provides money for building, and only requires a portion of the money be paid back. Another funding opportunity includes the National Housing Strategy Co-Investment Fund, which encourages creative partnerships to help create 2,400 new affordable units for people with developmental disabilities. Lastly, the Federal Lands Initiative supports the transfer of surplus federal lands and buildings to eligible participants at discounted to no cost, to encourage the development of affordable homes.



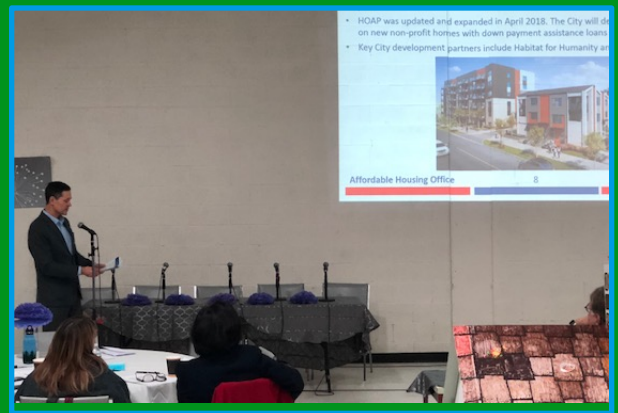
Erik Hunter – Manager of Policy and Partnerships, Affordable Housing Office (AHO), City of Toronto

The Affordable Housing Office (AHO) focuses on developing policies and encouraging partnerships which provide more affordable housing opportunities across the city. Currently, the AHO is working on their next 10-year housing strategy, for 2020-2030. Erik highlighted that the key messages being discussed at the TDSA Housing Forum regarding individuals with developmental disabilities aligns with the goals the City is looking to include in their next housing strategy.

The AHO launched the Open Door Program in 2016, an incentive program developed as a way to accelerate affordable housing options by increasing the City's work with non-profit and private developers. Erik stated that the City has exceeded its affordable housing quotas through this program for 2 years in a row.

Erik presented various examples of affordable housing projects that have been completed or are being developed throughout the City. The Mirvish Village Redevelopment is expected to be completed in 2020, and will provide 85 affordable rental units for lower income households.

Lastly, Erik noted that there will soon be new resources for affordable housing being released by the City (surplus city sites) and to check the AHO website in early 2019 for more information on how to access these opportunities.



New Affordable Housing Development in Toronto

Toronto's Affordable Housing Office

Toronto Developmental Services Alliance
Affordable and Supportive Housing Forum
November 30, 2018
Erik Hunter, Manager, Policy and Partnerships



Mirvish Village Redevelopment

- Affordable rental housing
- Westbank will provide a mix of 85 affordable rental units for lower-income households.
- Multiple funding sources: Federal, Provincial & City funding, Section 37 and incentives.
- Completion 2020



Affordable Housing Office

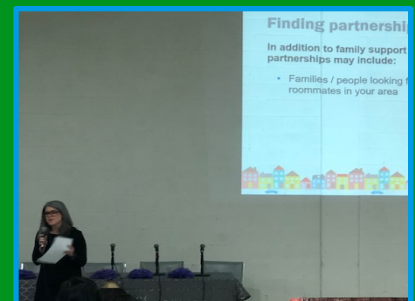
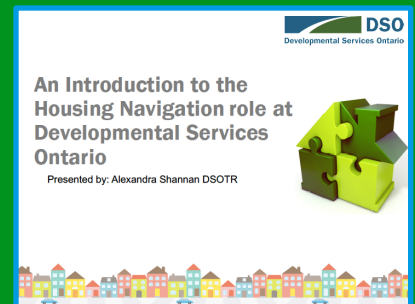
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Alexandra Shannan – Service Navigator & Housing Navigator, Developmental Services Ontario Toronto Region (DSO-TR)

Alexandra provided an overview of Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), and stated that the Housing Navigator position was created out of the feedback received from the Ombudsman's Report regarding Ministry response to situations of crisis involving adults with developmental disabilities. Alexandra's role is not to create housing, but to bring resources and services together. She has been working on developing support networks for families and connecting people to one another to share individual success stories.

The DSO recently completed a housing survey across Ontario, and Alexandra (along with the other Housing Navigators across the province) are working to build a toolkit of resources to have available for families.



Jenn Green – Project Manager, Greenwin Inc.

Greenwin is one of Canada's largest privately owned residential property management companies. Greenwin also has a Development Corporation and Green Realty, a retail leasing team. Jenn acknowledged that people are under housed, and need more appropriate housing options. She recognized that it is important to partner with non-profit agencies as they help with the seamless integration of tenants into buildings, and they are the experts regarding the clients that they serve.

Jenn offered insight into what developers need from Developmental Services agencies in order to have a successful partnership. She stated that agencies need to have an idea of what they are looking for, such as what the specific uses are of the building and who the tenants will be. Agencies need to decide whether they are going to place tenants long-term or short-term, and how the design of the unit will support this. People need to work together in order to create successful communities, and developers are very open to having long-term partnerships with non-profit agencies.

Panel Discussion

The afternoon of the TDSA Housing Forum consisted of a panel discussion with all of the presenters. Forum attendees were able to ask questions and discuss topics relevant to the day. The following is a brief summary of some of the questions that were asked and the conversations that took place.

How do agencies create better opportunities for partnerships?

- Erik (AHO) – use the Open Door Program as an opportunity to bring people together on projects and make connections. The City is always encouraging of everyone to brainstorm new ways to make creative partnerships.
- Michele (CMHC) – there are options to put structural frameworks around funding so that you require partnerships and different levels of affordability. A creative opportunity that has been done in the past has been “affordable housing speed dating”, putting together sectors that have the same need but may not know anything about each other.
- Jenn (Greenwin) – if agencies are clear, detailed and organized about their housing needs, it may already fit well with current projects that are being proposed. This would make creating partnerships easy and natural with developers.
- Bryan (Reena) - agencies need to dedicate time to invest in building relationships, to make it a priority. Agencies also have to re-think their way of connecting with people, and need to feel comfortable handing over trust and resources to partners who have expertise in the field.

How can families be engaged in the housing process to add strength to agencies but to also be considered a partner in the process?

- Alexandra (DSO-TR) stated that she could be contacted to help connect families, as she is open to exploring more ways her position can be utilized. Alexandra is also interested in creating more connections and networking opportunities between families and agencies.

How are agencies going to assist individuals living in their own homes if they do not have access to funding for supports?

- All of the panelists spoke about continuing to highlight to the Ministry that funding is an area of need. Bryan (Reena) highlighted that agencies who have data to speak to this can utilize it when speaking to the Ministry. Alexandra (DSO-TR) emphasized the importance of having community structures in place to make it easier for individuals to engage in community.

What is the current definition of affordable housing?

- Erik (AHO) said that the definition of affordable housing varies across different levels of government. The City's Average Market Rent (AMR) rates are currently based on federal definitions, which define affordable housing as shelter costs that equate to less than 30 percent of a household's pre-tax income. Erik recognized that these current definitions are problematic, as AMR is not based on ability to pay, therefore does not meet the needs of many households who struggle to find affordable rent. Erik hopes that this definition will be adapted for the City's upcoming 10-year housing strategy.

Feedback from the Forum

This year there were over 60+ attendees to the Housing Forum, with representation from over 13 Developmental Services Agencies.

What attendees found to be the most useful aspects:

- Why 5%-10% new builds need to be an important issue
- Seeing opportunities for partnerships and having networking opportunities
- Representation of all levels of government speaking to current initiatives, programs and funding
- Innovative housing models
- Making connections with a private developer, hearing from the private sector about their experiences partnering with non-profits
- Updates on TDSA's work
- Housing related statistics offered in Bryan Keshen's presentation

What attendees would like to see more of in the future:

- How other jurisdictions/countries are addressing similar topics to feed innovation
- Examples of successful partnerships between Ministries and agencies
- Speakers to discuss pilot housing projects throughout the GTA and/or province, how to start a plan and track progress
- Exploring in more detail the definition of "affordable housing"
- More parent and/or individual with a developmental disability involvement, including success stories/videos that focus on solutions

Focus Moving Forward

The TDSA will continue to engage with developers to create partnerships on affordable housing. The goal is to utilize the contact list of MPPs/City Councillors for planned/existing affordable housing opportunities. This list is available on the TDSA website.

Regarding the Socially Inclusive Housing Design, the plan is to complete a report that highlights the importance of building designs that enhance social connectedness and addresses social isolation within new high-rise stand alone buildings. This report is currently being drafted, and will be used to access new funding streams that support socially inclusive design within these new developing vertical communities.

TDSA encourages everyone to use the information/outreach materials on the website to support ongoing efforts related to accessing affordable housing. These materials include:

- Document of key messages
- TDSA Affordable Housing Brochure
- TDSA Housing Sub Committee Materials (Geo Map Report, Housing Forum Reports & Summary Reports)

Closing Remarks

At the Housing Forum, the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee announced that they will be wrapping up their work and dissolving the committee in March 2019. TDSA recognizes that access to affordable housing remains an important topic, therefore housing discussions will continue to be held with TDSA member agencies as a whole. TDSA member agencies will continue to strive to create new, affordable and innovative housing solutions for the clients they serve.

The TDSA website will continue to be emphasized as a valuable resource for materials and information for Developmental Services agencies as well as individuals with a developmental disability and their families.

The TDSA Housing Sub-Committee would like to thank everyone for their support and shared goal of addressing the unique housing needs of individuals with a developmental disability.



