



**360°
kids**

Surrounding kids
in crisis with care

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360°kids

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Markham City Council

RE: The need for a vacant home tax

Affordable housing is an important issue in York region, and its municipalities like Markham. Earlier this year, York Region Council declared it a crisis and as a result, increased attention is being placed to this significant issue. The lack of supply is one of the big drivers for the high cost of housing. Right now, rental housing accounts for about 20% of housing stock in the Region which creates a huge barrier for those with low incomes who end up spending 30-50% of their income on housing. For Markham to be a place for all, housing affordability must be addressed.

I believe that a vacant home tax can be a helpful tool to address housing affordability. We have seen the positive impact in Vancouver where over \$60M net was generated for the city through such a tax—funds which can be invested to create more housing. In addition, the tax encouraged property owners to return homes to become part of the housing stock for people to live in. This can also be achieved in Markham.

This issue of affordable housing is an important issue for agencies like 360°kids that serves a doubly marginalized population being that they are youth and, are homeless. It is also why I am also a member of the Affordable Housing Coalition for York Region. For over 32 years, with its beginnings in Markham, 360°kids has been providing a range of services to help these vulnerable young people move from crisis to stability in their lives. We cannot end homelessness without addressing housing affordability. Without safe, appropriate and affordable housing, homeless young people are not able to pursue their education goals nor be able to maintain employment or training opportunities. Instead, they would face some very difficult choices: continue to couch surf, put themselves in harm's way in exchange for a safe place to live, e.g. risk of human trafficking; or just leave their home community altogether and risk further entrenchment in homelessness. Not what any of us want.

This is why, as an organization, 360°kids continues to explore new and different kinds of housing options that meet the diverse needs of the youth we serve. But we cannot do it alone. We need you, as our Municipal partners to take advantage of the different tools available, to make Markham a place for all young people. I believe that the vacant home tax is one such tool that can help make Markham be a more affordable place to live.

Thank you.

Clovis Grant, Chief Executive Officer, 360°kids