

From: j Rose
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:38 PM
To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>
Subject: RE: Deputation - Written submission for Council meeting July 14th

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Hello

My name is Josie Rose. I am a Markham Resident. I would like to submit my written deputation for tomorrow's Council meeting, pertaining to item 8.1.1 Markham's Affordable Housing and Rental Strategy.

Please find the submission attached.

Thank you

Josie

Astra (Josie) Rose, B.A. (Hons.), M.S.W., R.S.W
Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember

you have within you the strength, patience and the passion

to reach for the stars to change the world.....

[Adapted. Harriet Tubman]

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written deputation today re: the Council's consideration to review/implement a Vacant Homes Tax in Markham. My name is Josie Rose, I am a long-time resident of Markham and a founding member of the Affordable Housing Coalition of York Region. As a person who supports individuals to secure housing in my professional life and has also personally experienced the very real challenges of securing affordable housing in Markham, I strongly believe all tools and strategies to increase the supply of available and affordable housing should be seriously considered by this Council.

The Affordable Housing Coalition of York Region (AHCYR) is comprised of organizations that serve the homeless or precariously housed, concerned residents, individuals with lived experience of homelessness and members with experience building not-for-profit housing.

We:

- Promote and advocate for Housing as a Human Right
- Share information and resources necessary to increase safe, affordable housing options
- Facilitate capacity building and networking among coalition members.

First of all, we recognize that Council is taking a final vote on the Affordable Housing Strategy for Markham on July 14th and we fully endorse that important step to address the need for increased affordable housing options in the city.

As municipalities across the GTA continue to engage in a process of consultation for the development of their own Affordable Housing Strategies, Markham being one, it is clear that most are putting numerous strategies on the table to address the significant shortage of housing and in particular affordable rental and home ownership options. As was declared in February of this year by the Regional Municipality of York, the region is in a housing crisis. Now is the time to take action.

All of us understand that housing is a complex and multi-layered challenge, which requires all levels of government to do their part. For that same reason, it will take a myriad of strategies, tools and policy/by-law revisions to accommodate the increase in affordable housing options that is required. What is on the table for discussion today is a Vacant Homes Tax; the AHCYR has supported this as one important tool to bring more existing homes/units on the market in the short-term.

A Vacant Homes Tax could be a win-win for everyone

From 2008 to 2018, the Region's subsidized housing waiting list (over ten years long) grew by 176%. Over 16,000 households are currently waiting. [Very few housing options of any type are affordable for the lowest-earning 40% of residents.](#) As residents face the growing threats of housing instability, displacement and homelessness, in every municipality in the region, passing **a vacancy tax** can be one of the immediate solutions to this crisis. Municipalities can collect a vacancy tax from homes purposely left vacant. This will encourage homeowners to use their properties by living in them or renting them out.

The Ontario provincial government has introduced legislation granting power to municipal governments to implement a tax on vacant residential units, encouraging property owners to sell empty units or rent them out. The goal of the tax is to encourage homeowners to rent out empty units, thereby increasing the supply of rental housing immediately available with no additional development required.

On December 16th, 2020 [Toronto](#) City Council announced a Vacancy Tax scheduled for 2022. [Ottawa](#) and [Hamilton](#) have also thrown their support behind the tax. One year after implementing a vacancy tax, [Vancouver](#) found 2,538 vacant homes in 2017. The number of vacant homes dropped by 22% the following year, and, in 2019, 1,548 of those homes returned to use. Funds raised from the tax, which netted Vancouver \$61.3

million, were then invested in building over 400 more affordable units and providing subsidies for thousands more.

The Richmond Hill Affordable Housing Strategy has made the recommendation to investigate whether a Vacant Homes Tax for residential properties that are empty for several months during the year, should be implemented. Markham should do the same.

I am writing today to encourage Members of Markham Council to seriously consider establishing a Vacant Homes Tax as one tool in your Affordable Housing Strategy that can contribute in a more, immediate way, to increasing the housing supply in Markham.

Implementing a Vacant Homes Tax:

- Can discourage speculation, add more housing to the market and raise funds to direct back to the building of truly affordable housing in Markham, and...
- Will demonstrate the Council's sincere commitment to taking immediate action on increasing the availability of affordable housing options for residents of Markham.

If you are not prepared to pass a motion to implement the tax at this time, we implore you to not reject this option outright but to ask staff to investigate the potential of the Vacant Homes Tax as one strategy to increase the availability of housing stock and in particular, housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income residents in Markham.

Thank you.

Josie Rose
Co Founder, Affordable Housing Coalition of YR
Markham Resident

