

Affordable Housing and Social Programs

A big problem regarding affordable housing and social programs is funding – Toronto needs more money.

Toronto knows how to run such programs successfully – such as the seniors housing supplied by Metro, the Homes for the Aged (by Metro) and the Cityhome program of affordable housing run by the city. These programs were all stopped when the feds (1993) and the province (1995) stopped funding them. As well, Toronto developed a good child care plan, but it was frustrated by the province.

If the city had more funding, what new powers would be required? Maybe we need the power to improve programs (such as by topping up welfare payment so that the top-up was not clawed back.) And the city probably needs the ability to deal directly with the feds (rather than going through the province) to access federal funds.

There was a fear that City Council may shirk its duty providing affordable housing or adequate social programs. Are general standards needed to ensure the city provides adequate services? This might be done by the feds (which funds welfare through the Social Assistance Act) or the province.

Or do we just assume that people must go after their local politicians to get adequate levels of service? Neighbourhood Councils can help people secure appropriate programs – it is not NIMBYism which prevent good local social programs, but rather funding. Neighbourhood councils can help create a good Official Plan which would define objectives for the city.

Summary:

1. Many social programs need more funding
2. Greater powers may be needed for the city
3. There's a fear that Council will not provide the social programs needed, and thus it may be necessary for federal and provincial standards to be defined.

Note: Toronto had the power to levy corporate taxes and income taxes until the 1930s, when it relinquished these powers in exchange for limited compensation.