Premier Doug Ford (doug.fordco@pc.ola.org)

The Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (steve.clark@pc.ola.org)

The Hon. Stan Cho, MPP for Willowdale (stan.cho@pc.ola.org)

February 22, 2022

**Re: Supportive Modular Housing at 175 Cummer Ave.**

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Clark, and Minister Cho,

We write you today to urge you to issue a Ministerial Zoning Order to expedite the construction of a 59-unit modular supportive housing project at 175 Cummer Avenue.

We are clergy, staff and laypeople of the Diocese of Toronto, several of whom live and work in Willowdale. Over the past several years, we have advocated with the City of Toronto and with the Province of Ontario on numerous occasions, urging both levels of government to take action on the lack of affordable and supportive housing for people in need.

We have commended the City for moving forward with its modular housing projects and have supported these projects at every turn. Anglicans in the wards where these projects have been planned have participated in town hall meetings and written messages of support to their councillors, have served on Community Liaison committees, and their parishes have reached out to welcome their new neighbours to the community. We do this because we have seen the growing impact of homelessness in our city – people forced to seek shelter in tents and under tarps and boxes, a growing number of unhoused people lining up at our food banks, drop-ins and meal programs, and month by month, a growing list of names outside the Church of the Holy Trinity, the names of people who have died in our city without a safe place to call their own. And we do it because we are called to love our neighbours as ourselves – particularly those neighbours who are most vulnerable.

The 59-unit project at 175 Cummer will not by itself, solve homelessness in Toronto – but it may mean the difference between life and death for the people who have been waiting for those units. And we cannot solve homelessness in Toronto, or anywhere in Ontario, if political leaders do not make use of the opportunities right in front of them to make a difference. This is one such opportunity.

While we have criticized the abuse of Ministerial Zoning Orders to override agricultural zoning and environmental protections in developments outside the city, this is not the case here. This is an urban area which has been identified by the city as an appropriate location for such a project. All other modular housing sites within the city have been granted MZOs to expedite the construction process. The modular units are ready and waiting. All that is needed is action.

Moreover, your own Housing Affordability Task Force recently issued a report identifying “NIMBYism” as a major obstacle to the creation of much needed housing, and recommended measures to limit consultation and implement “common sense changes that would allow housing to be built more quickly and affordably.” It is hard to see how this rationale does not apply to the current situation.

We all know that housing is urgently needed. None know it more than the unhoused Torontonians who could have been safe in their own homes if this project had received timely provincial backing months ago. We urge you to take the advice of your own Task Force – do not give in to NIMBYism by delaying this project further.

The best time to build affordable housing was years ago. The second best time is now. We urge you to take action now.

Yours faithfully,

Ms. Elin Goulden, Social Justice & Advocacy Consultant, Diocese of Toronto

The Rev. Canon Maggie Helwig, Chair, Social Justice & Advocacy Committee, Diocese of Toronto

Ms. Flo Cook, Chair, Housing Advocacy Subcommittee, Diocese of Toronto

The Rev. Canon Andrea Budgey, Chair, Poverty Reduction Subcommittee, Diocese of Toronto

cc. Councillor John Filion (councillor\_filion@toronto.ca)

cc. Councillor Ana Bailao (councillor\_bailao@toronto.ca)