



June 27, 2021

Mayor & City Council

Agenda Item #16 – Question Period

Dear Mayor & Council:

Questions:

1. In addressing the concerns identified in the letter from the Counselling Centre of East Algoma, how do we work collaboratively to address the crisis in Elliot Lake regarding affordable housing availability for some of our most vulnerable citizens?

The current pandemic magnified several gaps in our social support systems, most specifically, housing and mental health services. Maplegate has strengthened the following collaborative relationships to modify and amp up emergency supports with Algoma Public Health, ADSAB, Elliot Lake Retirement Living, Elliot Lake Food Bank, OPP, Canadian Mental Health Association and local landlords. Maplegate has been addressing this issue since 2018 in the following manner:

- Maplegate opened a men's emergency shelter in 2018 and has provided beds to over 150 men in distress. In 2021, Maplegate was successful in receiving a one-year grant for staffing at the men's shelter, through ADSAB.
- Maplegate opened a transition house for women on Lawrence in 2018 which has been incredibly successful and is generally at 100% occupancy.
- Maplegate purchased a 4-bedroom home for transitional housing for men at 7 Diefenbaker in 2021. This has allowed us to provide more space for emergency beds in the men's emergency shelter for 15 men during the 1st two months right after the purchase. Maplegate notified the City of Elliot Lake about the pending purchase as soon as we were notified that we were successful in the grant application in January 2021. We followed up with additional emails and finally received the forms to start the re-zoning process in June of 2021. That is a 6-month timeline.

- In April of 2020, just after the pandemic started, Elliot Lake Retirement Living stepped up and collaborated with Maplegate to provide 3 houses for Maplegate to rent to address the issues presenting for space for women during the pandemic. Two of the houses were run as transitional housing with outreach supports. One of the houses has been turned over to the occupant with 3 children, in her name, as a successful transition story. The other house, we would like to have rezoned as a transitional house for men. The 3rd house was returned to Elliot Lake Retirement Living due to expense factors as it was outside of our budget parameters.
- Maplegate put in an offer to purchase an additional home for transitional housing for women. The offer has been accepted and closes on August 30, 2021. We are applying for a zoning change.
- In 2021, Maplegate received additional funding for 1 year, from ADSAB, for additional Transitional/Outreach supports, for support for individuals. This has enabled Maplegate to build relationships with local landlords to assist in obtaining housing for some of our most vulnerable citizens, with the ongoing support of our outreach team.
- In 2021, Maplegate collaborated with ADSAB and the Elliot Lake Food Bank to start a Food Security Program for Maplegate clients, more specifically, those who are in transitional housing or outreach programs, that have challenges around food security, preparation and/or budgeting.
- Due to the large increase in demand for crisis intervention in substance use and mental health, Maplegate has trained staff in a new program called MBSAT, which is a mindful based substance abuse treatment that can be done virtually or in person, along with our newest virtual or in person program, Healing Arts, for women and children dealing with and processing mental health and emotional challenges. This is available for in house, transitional and outreach clients, as a support until they can gain access to traditional programs, if they chose to do so. Maplegate just received a \$199,000 grant from the Canadian Women's Foundation to provide the Healing Arts program to the Gender-Based-Violence shelters in the Northern region of Ontario.

Suggestions:

- *Provide additional opportunities to Maplegate, with COVID or other funding, to increase our transitional housing stock, and continue providing good work and support to those in need.*
 - *Provide Maplegate with the opportunity to develop vacant lots owned by the city, for affordable housing. Collaborate with Maplegate to provide these opportunities for development.*
 - *Provide letters of support, for Maplegate's grant applications.*
 - *Lobby ADSAB to continue with their support for the additional staffing for the men's and women's shelter, for transitional and outreach workers.*
2. **How do we modify the current process around rezoning, to assist in addressing the current housing crunch?**

During the emergency orders for Ontario during the pandemic, the Province of Ontario suspended the zoning restrictions to allow non-profits to put measures in place to provide immediate housing and protection from the pandemic, for vulnerable citizens. The Federal Government also provided money under COVID to provide housing. We purchased 7

Diefenbaker under this program. Our current process for zoning changes makes sense for a new build but puts immeasurable barriers in place when purchasing a house for transitional housing. Maplegate has repeatedly requested a solid process with shorter timelines that would enable the purchase of a property and a zoning change within a shorter time frame, to assist in the housing crunch.

Transitional housing provides a supportive home environment, with outreach supports, for up to 4 years, while waiting to get into affordable or social housing, market wise or from ADSAB. Heat, hydro, internet, laundry and phone access are all included in an affordable monthly rate, especially if you are on social assistance. It fills the emergency gap. ADSAB works tirelessly with us to transition individuals into their housing options, from our transition units.

Suggestions:

- ***We are suggesting that an 8-week process would allow us to put in an offer to purchase and have the zoning changed, before the finality of the purchase, thus working with the city in the same timelines.***
- We are currently applying for zoning changes on the following properties:
You will receive these applications within 1 week.
 1. 7 Diefenbaker Court, Elliot Lake
 2. 143 Frobeld Drive, Elliot Lake
 3. 138 Frobeld Drive, Elliot Lake – this is a rental
 4. We have an additional property that we are looking at for another men's transitional home, in the fall of 2021.

We as an organization, are working twice as hard as we ever have, to address the gaps that have been presented by the COVID pandemic. We have been present, face to face and in person, through this pandemic, supporting those who have fallen through the systemic gaps. We are here as an agency, to work hand in hand with our collaborative partners and the City of Elliot Lake, to address this crisis. We are inviting you to further conversations on how we can approach and address these challenges.

Respectfully,

Melody Rose/E.D.

Maplegate

Cc: Elliot Lake Women's Group Board of Directors