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Charitable Reg. #: 108227927 RR0001

April 29, 2015

Dear Mayor Nenshi and Members of City Council,

Re: Our Continued Support for Legalization of Secondary Suites

It is my understanding that there are items related to secondary suites coming to Council on Monday May 11th. On behalf of the YWCA of Calgary, I am writing to encourage you to support changes to existing policies and regulations that will improve the number of safe and affordable secondary suites in Calgary. We are especially supportive of the addition of secondary suites to the list of permitted uses in R1 zones in Wards 7, 8, 9, and 11.

As the largest and longest serving women’s organization in Calgary we encounter many vulnerable individuals who could benefit from the expansion of safe, affordable housing options in the community, including secondary suites. We supported more than 8,300 Calgarians in 2014 and more than 1,300 individual women and children spent at least one night in one of our emergency shelter or housing programs.

Each night, in excess of 200 women and children sleep under a YWCA roof in one of our emergency shelter or housing programs meant to support a woman in crisis due to family violence or homelessness. For many women such periods of crisis are protracted by the lack of safe, appropriate and affordable housing in. **In 2014, the average length of stay in our shelter and housing programs increased between 21 and 37 per cent over the year prior.**

With secondary suites, we can create additional units by making better use of existing housing and adding density in communities already equipped with infrastructure and services. While this will not be a boon in terms of real numbers, any additional housing capacity which can be brought into the market in short order is both necessary and welcome. Legitimizing suites also provides necessary protection for tenants.

Calgary is experiencing a housing crisis. More safe and affordable secondary suites will help. Please support the items that come before you on May 11th to end this debate and address the critical needs of people who simply need a roof over their heads. Approving suites in these wards and more broadly would demonstrate council’s readiness to address Calgary’s housing crisis.

Sincerely,

Sue Tomney
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA of Calgary