

R. Tipping
Thornbury, ON

March 17, 2021

Attn: Mayor A. Soever and Council

Re: My Response (pt 2) to Your letter of March 2, 2021

Dear Sir:

The second part of my response addresses the A.H. project. From the very beginning, this project has been mired in controversy. You have repeatedly stated the target group is the “missing middle” but Councillor Sampson stated in his Sept./20 response to me **“businesses in the area need a steady and reliable labour supply.”** Two years into the term and mixed messaging continues to create confusion and the clarity remains elusive.

The South Georgian Bay Tourism Labour Supply Task Force (May 2018) identifies the need for **affordable housing** for workers in the Blue Mountains. It also identifies low wages, job security part-time and seasonal employment as the other prime restraints. Your press release of Sept. 2018 announces the creation of the **Attainable Blue** action plan”. I ask, “ Within a four month span what was your justification to cherry pick and rebrand affordable as attainable housing? Why would you expect to achieve any level of success knowing the initiative focused on only one factor constraining the labour supply? The S.G.B. study appears to be a high level study and although it identifies the constraining factors, it does not make further recommendations as to how these factors can be successfully implemented. Why would two intelligent and experienced business persons commit to an initiative knowing the businesses sector was not committed to an action plan to address the remaining factors? I submit this was concocted by influencers in the business sector and in particular the Blue Mountain Resort and BMVA. The business sector put their support and influence behind those politically ambitious candidates that would support a publicly funded housing initiative specifically designed to accommodate their business needs.

Following the election, the prudent approach would have seen the implementation of a feasibility study to identify the specific demands for local housing to ensure inclusivity for all residents meeting the eligibility criteria. This would generated a needs based design(s), location recommendations, property sizing etc.resulting in a detailed financial plan including funding sources. Rather than taking a sensible and practical planning approach, the “Whistler Model” was adopted out of political expediency.

The advantage of the Attainable Housing designation places complete control and direction in the hands of the Council, the Board and business sector and ensures complete control of the narrative. Your “Attainable Blue” information states the Board of Directors will consist of seven members of the community appointed by Council and an

Executive Director but there is no mention of the Mayor and/or a Councillor heading and controlling the Board. Considering the Board was to be arms length the optics do nothing to instil public confidence in the process.

After watching the BMAHC board meeting of March 4, it is now acutely apparent this project is no longer targeting the “missing middle”. And you accuse me of posting inaccurate and misleading information on social media. Board members are suggesting units can be leased annually by the various employers to house workers and avoid the current subleasing controls. I don't believe that seasonal or transient workers will create a climate conducive for young parents, their children, doctors, medical staff, teachers and seniors.

Why does the Blue Mountain Resort and the BMVA in particular, believe the public is responsible for financing their staff housing requirements? If true, why not approach the Provincial government directly as other industries have done. I realize public funding would be greatly favoured by the American investors. The cost of building a housing facility would negatively impact the revenue stream. So much for Corporate conscience!

I would like to believe this Council considers workers real people, with real families, friends and dreams. For whatever the reason, they find themselves at the low end of the wage scale which for many is significantly lower than the area's “living wage” but they most likely will not be eligible. Regardless, they are valuable members of our community and should be treated with the respect they deserve. They are more than charts and statistics. They are not a commodity to be exploited by the business sector.

In conclusion, unlike Whistler, the Town of the Blue Mountains will not be defined by a resort. We are a far more diverse community.

Furthermore, I, like many believe there is a definite need for rental housing but I will not support a publicly funded facility that provides direct benefits to a multi-million dollar company. Also, project costs continue to increase and put additional strain on public funding. Appropriate measures to minimize financial exposure, projected cost estimates, confirmed funding sources, project's financial independence time-lines and other concerns have yet to be addressed.

Finally, I believe prior to the last election voters were led to believe **Attainable Blue** was a viable plan when in fact it was nothing more than an election ploy. Council's and the Board's performance over the past two years only strengthens this conclusion. It is now obvious there was no plan and as a result the electorate could not approve a plan that didn't exist. Council does not have a mandate for this initiative. It seems the spread of misinformation, fake news, continues to grow within our political circles.

Respectfully

Rick Tipping