

April 24, 2023

Councillor Carroll, Chair
Members Economic and Community Development Committee
City of Toronto

Re: EC3.13 - Review of policies and procedures related to Warming Centres

While I welcome this report's appeal for \$20 million in Canada-Ontario housing benefits and the modest, yet still inadequate, shift in the temperature criteria, this report continues to reflect chaos in the city's approach to a three-decade old humanitarian disaster.

Toronto now has a four-tiered shelter system. The 'regular' shelter system with its set of standards, the 24-hr respites with an inferior set of standards, the COVID shelter-hotel response, and the temperature-based warming/cooling centres, also with lower standards. If you don't understand what I mean by this you should, as a committee, tour a sampling of all these locations.

There remains no right to safe, appropriate shelter in the city. This is evidenced by your own death statistics, Central Intake unmatched callers (119.8/day in March), growing encampments and forced outdoor sleeping/survival and the resulting worsening health status which you are going to study.

In 1998 Metro Toronto Council voted 53-1 to declare [homelessness a disaster](#) requiring federal aid (a Holyday was the sole holdout vote – some things don't change). Mayor Mel Lastman allowed City Councillor Jack Layton to take this appeal to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and cities from Victoria to Ottawa followed the Toronto lead. The result – federal ministers toured the Toronto/Canada shelter/homeless disaster (like a tour of a natural disaster), a cabinet minister was appointed to address homelessness and a new federal program poured billions into the issue across the country.

27 years after the bandaid measure of warming centres was initiated there is little to celebrate in this report on warming centres that furthers the city's chaotic response to shelter need.

Why not declare a right to shelter?

Why not insist on meeting the 90% shelter capacity recommendation (previously voted for in 1999, 2003, 2013 yet never met)?

Why not commit to open sites to meet shelter need regardless of a weather report?

Why not recommend declaring homelessness an emergency?

I understand the obvious inattention by the province to both income supports and social housing. It was thus disappointing to hear that Deputy Mayor McKelvie did not attend the Ontario Big City Mayors meeting in Kitchener last week, given their focus on homelessness and housing. Mayor Horwath and Hamilton City Council have declared homelessness an emergency and it is this level of advocacy you need to take.

Recommendations:

- 1) Declare homelessness an emergency and invite provincial and federal ministers for a tour of Toronto's crisis.
- 2) Declare and enact a right to safe shelter in the city.
- 3) Actualize the 90% shelter capacity standard.
- 4) Establish a moratorium on encampment evictions until there is a rehousing plan.
- 5) Explore the use of the [fourth Sprung structure](#) for emergency shelter.
- 6) Recommend 24/7 multi-site cooling centres that will meet the city's shelter standards immediately.
- 7) Establish 24/7 multi-site warming centres that will meet the city's shelter standards.

Cathy Crowe, long-time Street Nurse, C.M.