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Chair Giorgio Mammolitti  
Members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee

## **Background:**

When Hurricane Sandy-related storms arrived in Toronto the last week of October, it is my opinion that the City of Toronto was not ready for the impact it would cause to our homeless population.

I had asked Toronto Public Health and Shelter, Support and Housing staff to confirm that additional shelter beds would be made available to those who sought shelter during the storms. Staff confirmed that 100 additional emergency beds would be made available and that anyone who needed shelter would be offered assistance. I was also advised that 129 Peter Street, the Assessment and Referral Centre would be the clearinghouse and referral space of such services.

Furthermore, it was confirmed Toronto's Office of Emergency Management is responsible for the overall management of any emergencies or disasters. I was told that during an emergency situation this group is collectively responsible for the direction and coordination of emergency response operations within the City of Toronto.

The goals of the Office of Emergency Management is to save lives, reduce suffering, sustain health and morale, minimize property damage, maintain and restore utilities and essential services; simply put, they work to neutralize the effects of the emergency and effect rehabilitation.

Members of this group are responsible for managing and coordinating emergency operations and providing the personnel and resources needed to minimize the

effects of the emergency on the City.

Given the staff assurances and level of emergency preparedness that appeared to be in place, it is surprising to learn that homeless people were unable to secure a bed during the storm and were turned away or found sleeping in the lobby of 129 Peter Street despite the preparatory efforts of Shelter, Support and Housing staff and the Office of Emergency Management.

I have since learned that approximately 40 homeless individuals were unable to secure a shelter bed, yet the City of Toronto produced 165 additional temporary shelter beds in preparation of the storm, of which only 41 were occupied during this period of emergency.

**Recommendation:**

City Council request the Director of the Office of Emergency Management and the General Manager of Shelter, Support and Housing to review the protocol and communication strategy for our homeless and street-involved populations during emergencies and to report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in March 2013 with an revised and updated emergency preparedness plan for this demographic.

Respectfully submitted,



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