



# Eric Cashmore

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## DEPUTATION

**To:** City of Toronto; Community Development and Recreation Committee

**Date:** April 17, 2014

**Location:** City Hall, Committee Room 1 - 100 Queen Street West, Toronto

**Background documents:**

**1) Feasibility of 24-Hour Drop-in service for Women (REPORT)**

City of Toronto, April 3, 2014

**2) 24/7 Drop-in Service for Women: Stakeholder Consultations Executive Summary (REPORT)**

City of Toronto, Not dated

**3) Letter from the Toronto Women's City Alliance to Toronto's CDRC**

Toronto Women's City Alliance , April 14, 2014

**4) Letter from the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children to the Toronto CDRC**

METRAC (Toronto), April 17, 2014

**5) Letter from Councilors Wong-Tam and Mihevc to the Chair of the CDRC**

City of Toronto, October 28, 2013

**6) Update on Feasibility of 24-Hour Drop-in Services for Women**

City of Toronto, January 7, 2014

This written deputation is being submitted without the presentation of oral arguments.

This deputation has been developed for public distribution. In addition to being submitted to the "Community and Recreation Committee" of the City of Toronto, this deputation has also been distributed to:

[www.facebook.com/eric.cashmore](http://www.facebook.com/eric.cashmore)

Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

Toronto HIV Network

Toronto People with AIDS Foundation

FIFE House

Social Planning Toronto

Marathon Marjorie House

Attention: Community Development and Recreation Committee members

I wish to start by thanking RHEA STARKES - Executive Director and JENNIFER SPEKKING - Residential Counsellor at the Marathon Marjorie House, a shelter for women with assisting me in the making of this deputation.

I write today to express the importance of a 24 hour safe sight for women in Toronto. I believe that this is a necessity for our city for a variety of key reasons.

First, there is an identified need for 24 hour support, counselling and referral services for street involved women in the city of Toronto. It is well known that women are most vulnerable in late-night hours. During these hours, accesses to essential services are normally not available. This means that women have nowhere usually to turn to but hospitals and the police. The issue with these options is that people tend to be afraid of the consequences and repercussions of seeking out medical and legal assistance. They may or may not have a history with the police and often people fear that even going to a hospital may still involve them. This fear actually often proves to be true.

Second, the implementation of a 24 hour facility for women would increase the overall safety for those who are vulnerable. Giving these women a place that they can turn to that is available around the clock will surely lower the occurrence of things such as domestic violence, street violence and even suicides. The consideration of overall safety for vulnerable women must always be at the forefront of any decision impacting their well-being.

Third, women tend to need somewhere to turn to immediately following crisis. Most women will not follow up with issues if they are asked to wait or delay seeking assistance. They are also more likely to accept additional supports once the initial contact is made.

It also must be considered that women aren't always looking for on-going support. Often women will want to get out of a "hot" situation. They seek to leave the area for a short time, and then return back. The creation of a 24 hour drop in facility would provide the ability for women to leave their current situation and be in a safe space until they are ready to return home.

There is also the need for social supports. Women tend to communicate better with other women who are going through, or have gone through a similar situation. This offers not only a therapeutic approach to resolving the issue, but provides for the potential of creating ongoing contacts for these women to socialize with and support one another in the future.

We must also consider the issue of overcrowding in existing shelters as well. In the letter from Councilors Wong-Tam and Mahevc, addressed to Councilor Perruzza on October 28, 2013, the councilors note that shelters in the city of Toronto are still operating at 90% capacity, causing a street involved person to remain on the streets, which has a significant impact on the health and safety of our homeless population.

It is for this reason that I recommend that city council approves the operation of a 24 hour women's drop in facility on a one year pilot project basis. This would allow city council the opportunity to collect vital statistics on the overall effectiveness of such a facility as well as gather a true perspective of the potential operating costs.

I'd like to take this time to thank you for your time and consideration of my deputation.

ERIC CASMHMORE  
April 16, 2014  
Toronto, Ontario