

January 15, 2015.

To City of Toronto Council Members:

cc.

Shelter Support and Housing Administration

cdrc@toronto.ca<<mailto:cdrc@toronto.ca>> The agenda item is #CD1.2

We ask that City Council initiate plans for including shelter beds space for homeless youth that are between the ages of 12 and 15, who are currently left out in the cold in circumstances where Children's Aid Services are not providing any housing or shelter options.

Furthermore, we support the motions previously made to bring shelter occupancy rates down to 90%, and would like to see that decision come to fruition. We write to request this action of increasing the number of shelter spaces available for use, be undertaken immediately. Furthermore, we request that more flexibility is used when deciding on when to open 24 hour warming centres during the extreme cold weather.

The City of Toronto and the Medical Officer of Health are well aware of the health impacts that may result from exposure to extreme cold, when shelter beds are full and people cannot access safe warm spaces. Frostbite, hypothermia and heart conditions are a few that are listed on the city's website as being a health concern related to extreme cold weather that may lead to amputation or death if not prevented (1). It is deplorable that Toronto did not take action to prevent such cases of death, which recently happened in our city as warming centres were not made available. Please do not let this reoccur.

We are also still waiting for the 24 Drop in Service for Women to open, which we call on you now to expedite. City Council has already approved the application for this drop in, it is needed, having it open immediately would be an added resource against the cold weather exposure.

In addition, we also request increased access to shelter options for pets to be admitted with shelter occupants; increased harm reduction supports in all shelters; and increased access to on-site healthcare.

Regards,

Bobbi Jo Quigley, RN, BScN,

On behalf of Street Nurses Network, Toronto, Ontario.

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<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=f187fec7e1aa9410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>