



Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers  
autorisés de l'Ontario

Mayor Tory and Toronto City Councillors  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

**RE: Please take emergency action on shelter beds.  
CD24.7 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and Progress Report, December 5-7, 2017**

Dear Mayor Tory and members of Toronto City Council,

I am writing about the current shelter crisis in Toronto. The demand for shelter services in the city has been rising steadily since 2012.<sup>1 2 3</sup> Demand for shelter beds has stretched the system's capacity beyond its limits.<sup>4</sup> The city's daily shelter census occupancy rates regularly exceed 90 per cent; the latest reported rate was 96 per cent, for November 13, 2017.<sup>5</sup> Given our long history of advocacy on behalf of homeless people, the Registered Nurses' Association Ontario (RNAO) is urging the city to take action to address this serious matter before the temperatures drop, and homeless people begin to die in our streets.

Toronto has many homelessness people. Compared with other cities in Canada, Toronto has the second highest percentage of its citizens in core housing need – 19.9 per cent in 2014.<sup>6</sup> Homelessness is a virtual guarantee of misery and ill health. Homelessness is preventable and so are many of the related deaths. Toronto must take steps to save homeless people's lives.

This is why for the December 5-7 Meeting 35 of City Council, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) urges you to support the recommendations of the Community Development and Recreation Committee in the 2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and Progress Report (item CD24.7). In particular, we ask you to:

- Declare an emergency for the shelter system
- Open 1,000 new shelter beds
- Open emergency shelters at the Fort York and Moss Park armouries

The full text of the relevant recommendations<sup>7</sup> reads as follows:

9. "City Council request the Mayor to use his authority under the Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 59, Emergency Management, to declare an emergency exists with respect to the City's shelter system and direct that a response be created that allows for additional temporary shelter space for men and women, including trans-accessible beds, to be opened by the end of 2017 to protect the health, safety and welfare of our most vulnerable residents for the duration of the emergency."
1. "City Council direct the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to include in the 2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan the opening of 1,000 new shelter beds

(rather than drop-in beds) to meet the standard of 90 per cent shelter occupancy across all sectors, which includes low-threshold, harm reduction focused shelters.”

11. “City Council request the Mayor to contact the Federal Government through the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defense to open emergency shelters at the Fort York Armoury and the Moss Park Armoury for the duration of the emergency.”

Mayor Tory, we urge you and your fellow members of council – in the strongest possible terms – to accept these recommendations. It is a matter of life and death for Toronto’s homeless population.

Warmest regards,



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT  
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO

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<sup>1</sup> City of Toronto. *Staff report: Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to SSHA*, 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto (2016). *2016-2017 Winter Readiness and Update on Shelter Occupancy*. October 5, 2016. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-97132.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> City of Toronto (Nov. 10/17). *2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and Progress Report*.

<sup>4</sup> City of Toronto (Oct. 11/2017). *Report for Action: Managing Refugee Flows*.

<sup>5</sup> City of Toronto (2017). *Daily Shelter Census*, November 13, 2017.

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=4ec8c0e9f7301410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=c0aeab2cedfb0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>.

<sup>6</sup> Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2017). *Core housing need remains high in Peterborough and Toronto*. Ottawa. [https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/observer/observer\\_129.cfm](https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/observer/observer_129.cfm)

<sup>7</sup> Toronto. (2017). *2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and Progress Report*.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD24.7>.