



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

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Bargaining Units:

Bridgepoint Hospital
- Nurses & Paramedical
Units
- Service Units

City of Toronto
- Full-Time
- Long-Term Care Homes
& Services Part-Time
- Recreation Workers
Part-Time
- Unit B Part-Time

*Toronto Community
Housing Corporation*

**SERVING OUR
MEMBERS
SINCE
1942**

January 15, 2015

CD1.6.4

Councillor James Pasternak, Chair, and
Members of the Community Development & Recreation Committee
c/o Clerk's Office
10th flr., West Tower
City Hall
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Pasternak and Members of the Community Development and
Recreation Committee:

RE: Homelessness and Cold Weather

On behalf of CUPE Local 79 members working in Shelters, Support & Housing, I am here to support Councillor Mihevc's motions to increase capacity in the City's shelter system to the 90% recommended by City Council, and to find the means, immediately, to open two 24/7 drop-in shelters for vulnerable women. No one should be turned away from a shelter; we must take care of the homeless, tonight and every night.

We must work together here in the City to save the lives of people who find themselves alone, cold and on the streets with nowhere to turn.

The official figure of 91% shelter occupancy rate last week does not tell the full story of how swamped the system is and how it desperately needs more resources to ensure that no one freezes to death in the cold.

Figures provided by the city show Toronto shelters had an occupancy rate of 93 per cent on Monday night, but some categories had little room to spare. Co-ed shelters were at 98 per cent occupancy with just eight vacancies, and spaces for men, women, youth and family ranged from 94 to 96 per cent occupied. Only spaces for families in motels were below the city's 90-per-cent target, at 69 per cent (*The Globe and Mail, January 13, 2015*).

For far too many budget cycles, Shelters and other vital City Divisions have seen their budgets cut, frozen, not even keeping up with inflation. In fact the last Operating Variance Report for the Nine-Month Period Ended September 30, 2014 showed a net under-spending in SSHA of \$7.789 million largely as a result of under-expenditures in salaries and benefits. The same Report also shows that SSHA has 33 vacant front-line positions that need filling. Our shelter system desperately needs more beds and more staff to deliver services and support to the homeless.

For the Streets to Homes program to be more effective there needs to be an assessment of the actual needs of the homeless, not just in the downtown core, but in communities all across Toronto. There also needs to be an assessment of the appropriate number of staff needed for the program.

I would also like to hear reassurances from this Committee that the revitalization of Seaton House will not reduce its capacity to provide emergency beds during extreme weather conditions - both hot and cold.

We understand the need for the revitalization of Seaton House, and the recommended development partnership between the shelter system and Long-Term Care Homes & Services may hold promise of an integrated model of care for some of the City's homeless. But those emergency shelter beds are still needed.

With the loss of human lives weighing heavily on all our minds after four homeless people died in the last week, we must put in place not only an immediate fix but we must foster the political will for a long-term solution.

Supportive and affordable housing is a large part of the solution here, but the reality for the City is that there are huge holes in the budget that the Provincial and Federal Governments should be filling. Both the Ontario Government and the Federal Government need to step up with strategies and commitment for housing.

Investing in our shelters is our duty and moral imperative. After yet another January night of sub-zero temperatures, I think we all know what must be done.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Maguire', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Maguire
President