Dear Toronto city clerk,

We are contacting you on behalf of 113 healthcare providers and 18 community organizations that work with the homeless population in Toronto. We are writing to share our concerns regarding the report on the George Street Revitalization, which is coming before council today on November 3rd, 2015.

Please see the attached letter. If it can be attached to the formal record, that would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Michaela Beder, MD and Ritika Goel, MD
on behalf of 18 community organizations and 113 healthcare providers
November 2, 2015

Re: George Street Revitalization Oct 5 Report on EX 9.6 to Council

To the Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council:

As healthcare providers working with people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, we are writing with concerns about the implementation plans outlined in a recent report on the George Street Revitalization (GSR), which goes before City Council on November 3, 2015. While we value important steps proposed towards better service for vulnerable populations in this proposal, we are compelled to raise serious concerns we have about the potential impacts on vulnerable people that need to be addressed before this plan is fully implemented.

1. A significant loss of total shelter beds
   Despite a past commitment from the city that no shelter beds will be lost through this process, the recently released report leaves at least 200 shelter beds unaccounted for. While the report outlines efforts to house current occupants, one shelter bed cannot be replaced with one housing unit. In 2014, each shelter bed was used by an average of 3.7 people. In 2013, the city of Toronto made a commitment to keep shelter occupancy to less than 90%, a commitment which is regularly exceeded. Given an already overstretched system, we cannot have further loss of beds without realistic plans to accommodate all of the people displaced by the changes proposed. As such, we ask for a detailed account of how each of the 674 beds at Seaton House and the Schoolhouse will be maintained, and how the target of <90% occupancy will be met.

2. Location of replacement shelter beds
   There is no clear plan outlined as to the location of replacement shelter beds. The current users of Seaton House regularly frequent drop-ins, medical clinics, harm reduction supports, mental health supports and hospitals, often by foot, and many have a community in the city core. We therefore ask for a detailed plan that ensures that any new shelter beds will only be located in settings that offer the full range of health and social services necessary for this complex population, with the same expertise and access as is currently available downtown.

3. Clear and appropriate transition planning
   Given the vulnerable nature of the men who use Seaton House shelter services, we ask that detailed transition planning occur before any individual is moved, and client choice be prioritized. This is a transient population with a high likelihood of re-entry into the shelter system, and therefore requires appropriate levels of rent supplements, and needs-matched high quality community and housing supports that take into account mental illness, addictions, cognitive impairment and complex physical health needs.

   We realize the City can’t solve homelessness alone. Beyond the George Street Revitalization, as we witness other shelters closing and a chronic lack of subsidized housing, we encourage provincial and federal governments to fund a housing strategy--and a strategy to end homelessness--that includes ample safe, subsidized and supportive housing for those who need it.

   We look forward to your response.
   Sincerely,
Organizational signatories

AAPRICOT - Addiction Assessment Psychotherapy Referral in the Community of Toronto
Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA)
Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
FCJ Refugee Centre
Gerstein Centre
Health Providers Against Poverty
Inner City Health Associates
Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
Queen West - Central Toronto Community Health Centre
OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Parkdale Community Health Centre
Regent Park Community Health Centre
Sanctuary
Sistering - A Woman's Place
South Riverdale Community Health Center
Street Health
Street Nurses Network
Toronto Harm Reduction Workers' Union

Individual signatories

Elia Abi-Jaoude, MSc, MD, FRCPC, Staff Psychiatrist, The Hospital for Sick Children, University of Toronto
Monica Agarwal, Family Physician, Inner City Health
Sacha Agrawal, MD, MSc, FRCPC
Namarig Ahmed, RN

Zenita Alidina, MD, Psychiatry Resident, University

Jon Awerbuck, Primary Care Physician, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Brendan Bailey, Community Health Nurse

Lucy Barker, MD, Psychiatry Resident

Ahmed Bayoumi, MD, MSc, FRCPC

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Philip Berger, MD, Medical Director, Inner City Health Program, St. Michael's Hospital

Miranda Bicanic, Case Manager, COTA

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Kirsten Dixon, MD, CCFP, Inner City Family Health Team

Zoe Dodds, Program Coordinator, Toronto Community Hepatitis C Program

Katie Dorman, Family Physician

Naheed Dosani, Family Physician, Inner City Health Associates

Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Kathleen Doukas, MD

Cheryl Eadie, MSW, RSW, Social Worker – Mental Health, Inner City Family Health Team

Sarah Eckler, MD, Queen West Community Health Centre
Anne Egger, RNEC, member of Health Providers Against Poverty

Larisa Eibish, Family Physician, Sherbourne Health Centre

Raquel Figueroa, RD, CDE, (Registered Dietitian, Certified Diabetes Educator)

Olivia Flaherty, Nurse, Inner City Family Health Team

Kenneth Fung, MD, FRCPC MSc, Clinical Director, Asian Initiative in Mental Health, Toronto Western Hospital

Tanja Futter, RN, Sanctuary

Avelit Gabler, Cardiac Nurse, St. Michael's Hospital

Amy Gajaria, MD, University of Toronto

Sharon Gazeley, MD, FCFP

Abbas Ghavam-Rassoul, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FCFP, Family Physician, St. Michael’s Hospital

Avvy Yao-Yao Go, Barrister & Solicitor, Clinic Director, Metro Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

Ritika Goel, MD, MPH, Family Physician, Inner City Health Associates

David S. Goldbloom, OC, MD, FRCPC, Senior Medical Advisor, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto

Samantha Green, MD, CCFP, Primary Care Lead, Inner City Health Associates & Family Physician, St. Michael's Hospital

Tim Guimond, MD, FRCPC

Jessica Hales, RNEC, Street Health

Elise Hall, MD

Ken Harrison, MD, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Asumi Hayashi, RN, Nurse Case Manager

Kate Hayman, MD, MPH, FRCPC, Emergency Physician, University Health Network
Debbie Honickman, MD, Queen West Community Health Centre

Kyrsten Howat, Nurse, Inner City Family Health Team

Stephen Hwang, MD, MPH

Kristen Ireland, Health Promoter, Inner City Family Health Team

Lara Iserman, Case Worker, Sistering

Carol Karakus, Case Manager, COTA

Sang Won Kim, Fixed-Site Support Worker, COUNTERfit Harm Reduction Program, South Riverdale Community Health Centre

Antoaneta Kostadinova, Case Manager, COTA

Ashok Krishnamurthy, MD, CM, CCFP, Dip. ABAM, Medical Director, AAPRICOT

Rachel Kronick, MD, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Toronto

Lorraine Lam, Outreach Worker, Sanctuary

Lanadee Lampman RN, Parish Nurse, The Cathedral Church of St James

Samuel Law, MD, FRCPC, Staff Psychiatrist

Matthew Levy, MD, FRCPC, Staff Psychiatrist

Ada Lindsay, Case Manager, COTA

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Thomas Man, MD, Family Physician, Central Toronto Community Health Centre

Chetan Mehta, MA, MD, CCFP, Family Physician

Melissa Melnitzer, Family Physician, Inner City Health Associates

Cherie Miller, Director of Community Health, Regent Park Community Health Centre

Arash Nakhost, MD, PhD

Patricia O’Connell, Executive Director (interim), Sistering – A Woman’s Place

Andrea Perry, OT Reg. (Ont.)
Andrew Pinto, MD, CCFP, FRCPC, MSc

Carolyn Pitchot, Nurse Practitioner

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Ashley Raeside, MSc, Medical Student, University of Toronto

Nanky Rai, MPH, MD

Jesleen Rana, MD, CCFP

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Priyadarshani Raju, MD

Josie Ricciardi, MSW, RSW, Social Worker

Franscisco Rico-Martinez, Co-Director, FCJ Refugee Centre

Loly Rico, Co-Director, FCJ Refugee Centre

Shirley Roberts, Executive Director (interim), Parkdale Community Health Centre

Angela Robertson, Executive Director, Queen West-Central Toronto Community Health Centre

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Shannon Ryan, Executive Director, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention

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Suzanne Shoush, Family Physician, Inner City Health Associates

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Melanie Spence, Nurse, Health for All

Jim Sugiyama, MD

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Alexander Zsager, Chair - Inner City Health Association CAC