

**From:** [George Street](#)  
**To:** [Executive Committee](#); [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Concerns re: George Street Revitalization  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 3, 2015 8:14:12 AM  
**Attachments:** [GSR letter to city council - Nov 2, 2015.pdf](#)

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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

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## **Individual signatories**

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