

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

7 December 2020

Re: Central Intake Shelter Access Data Indicators and Trends EC18.6

Dear Economic and Community Development Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this urgent issue today.

My name is Randi Sears, I am a resident of Ward 9 and a social worker, working in the shelter system.

I am writing to say that the report before you is insufficient in an emergency and immediate action is needed. In this report, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration has admitted, for the first time, that people cannot access shelter when they need it. The situation on the ground is dire, every day I speak to people who are desperate to find a safe place to go. All shelters are full, it takes weeks of daily calls to central intake lines to find one family or person space. It is urgent that this Committee take meaningful action today because of the three crises facing people in encampments: the housing crisis, the opioid poisoning and overdose crisis and the global pandemic.

While many people, weighing their options, find the shelter and shelter-hotel system acceptable, many people experience shelters and shelter-hotels as unsafe. The forcible eviction of people from encampments puts people's health at risk; this is why it is against the [recommendations of the CDC](#). Forced decampment is also a [violation of international human rights law](#).

I am calling on you to pass motions today for/to:

1. An immediate moratorium on forced evictions of encampment residents and temporary shelters from public spaces.
2. Open at least 2,000 new shelter-hotel rooms in the next 4 months. This is the only way people will have a safe alternative to living outside in encampments, given that shelters are currently full. For these sites to be successful and truly safe for people:
 - All sites must have overdose prevention services and support on-site that is provided by experienced harm-reduction staff.
 - Half of the sites must be located in the downtown core, to ensure people aren't disconnected from critical services and their communities.
3. Provide services to people in encampments.
 - Provide \$1 million to community agencies to distribute survival supplies and fire safety equipment to encamped individuals.

- Ensure people have access to indoor facilities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – including access to winterized bathrooms and showers for encampments adjacent to City sites.

This Committee, and City Council later this month, can act to save lives. These three provisions will save lives.

Thank you,

Randi Sears

Cc: Mayor John Tory