

December 7, 2020

To: Economic and Community Development Committee, EC18.6 Central Intake Shelter
Access Data Indicators and Trends - Update

My name is Paige Homme. I am a medical student at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto and a member of Healthcare Providers Against Poverty. I am here as an individual in solidarity with our unhoused neighbours surviving the pandemic outside in Toronto's encampments.

I support the following demands:

- 1) For a moratorium on encampment evictions and to immediately stop seizing basic survival equipment, like Tiny Shelters by Khaleel Seivwright, tents and Foam Doams from public spaces.

Encampments reflect the City of Toronto's policy and planning failures to develop affordable housing, compounded further by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before COVID-19, Toronto was in an unaffordable housing crisis.

- A [2018 ACORN Report](#) found that the majority of people living on low incomes in our city, including single people living on minimum wage and people receiving the Ontario Disability Support Program Benefit (ODSB), are paying unaffordable rent [1].
 - Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, [shelters in Toronto operated at close to 100% capacity](#) [2]. In the spring and summer of the COVID-19 crisis [shelter capacity was substantially reduced](#) [3].
 - On top of that, thousands of people are at imminent risk of being evicted because they cannot keep up with their rent.
 - Currently the City is saying officials will not imminently evict people from encampments in public spaces, however a moratorium has yet to be declared.
- 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 at capacity.
 - All sites must have overdose prevention services and support on-site that is provided by experienced harm-reduction staff. [A recent report in the Local](#) [4] suggests that at least 5 overdose deaths have occurred in shelter hotels since May, although the city does not keep track of official numbers. Every death is one too many.
 - When shelter hotels or individual rooms are available, they are often located far away from people's support networks and their social and health services. Therefore, I am asking for half of the sites to be in the downtown core to ensure people are not disconnected from critical healthcare services and their communities.

3) To 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, clean, well-stocked bathrooms and hot showers for encampments adjacent to City public sites.

Encampment residents have a right to choose for themselves where they live and what their ‘safest option’ is. The City must respect encampment residents’ right to self-determination as well as their individual needs, circumstances, health supports, and to live in their community of choice.

Encampments will persist until there is enough adequate, safe, and dignified housing for all Toronto residents.

Signed,

Paige Homme (she/they)

References

(1) Affordable for Who? Redefining Affordable Housing in Toronto. 2018. *Acorn Canada with input from the Wellesley Institute and Scott Leon*. (pg 5-6)

https://acorncanada.org/sites/default/files/ACORN%20Affordable%20Housing%20Definition%20Report%20July%202018_1.pdf

(2) Toronto’s Vital Signs Report - Housing 02. 2019/20. Toronto Foundation. (pg 41)

https://torontofoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/VitalSigns2019_02_Housing.pdf

(3) For information about reduction in shelter capacity during COVID-19, see (pg 29) of the Factum of the Moving Parties on [the motion by housing advocacy organizations against the City of Toronto](#).

September 24, 2020. <https://ccla.org/cclanewsitewp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-09-24-Applicants-factum-on-enforcement-motion-FINAL1.pdf>

(4) Zwarenstein, Carlyn. The Cost of a Stay at a Shelter Hotel. November 23, 2020. *The Local*.

<https://thelocal.to/the-cost-of-a-stay-at-a-shelter-hotel/>