

From: [Angie Hocking](#)
To: [Economic and Community Development](#)
Cc: [Angie Hocking](#)
Subject: My comments for 2023.EC1.5 on January 11, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee
Date: January 9, 2023 9:57:39 PM

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the January 11, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee meeting on item 2023.EC1.5, COVID-19 Shelter Transition and Relocation Plan Update 2023

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Name: Rev. Angie Hocking, Regent Park Community Ministry

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My name is Rev. Angie Hocking. I will get right to the point; I am giving this deputation in writing because I want to give a trigger warning of sexual assault (please do not read further if you are sensitive to this content).

I will say this bluntly, but I believe it needs to be said. I know several people who have experienced rape after losing their spot at a shelter-hotel. It's a horrible trend that, from my community work experience, doesn't seem to end. We cannot allow vulnerable people to suffer in this type of horrendous way any longer!

The trauma people are enduring on the street is incomprehensible. There is a large percentage of folks experiencing homelessness who will not enter a traditional shelter for lots of good reasons. Many people I know finally felt safer with the shelter-hotel option, but since those are impossible to acquire now, they are left to sleeping outdoors. And these violent and traumatic assaults just keep happening to people I care deeply about. One woman told me of a man (wealthy and housed) who would drive down from North York, purposely looking for women who were looking for a warm private room who couldn't get one in the system. He would offer them money and warmth in his car, and then rape them. A friend who is on the street who lost his shelter-hotel spot when it closed, told me of a man who stood over him in his tent with a knife before assaulting him. The experience has left him unable to sleep at night, so now he roams the street until daylight breaks, often using drugs to force himself to stay awake. I could tell many more stories with a similar endings, as could ALL of my colleagues who do outreach work. We must snap out of it- this isn't just about keeping people warm. Its about keeping people safe from trauma and death. These types of things cannot continue to happen due to lack of room in our system.

It is completely unsafe to deny people safe, private indoor options. The shelter-hotels were a

step in the right direction- we cannot afford to lose any more spaces. We must keep them in place and build on this foundation- not blow the foundation apart and make everything much worse. In addition, 24/7 respite spaces NEED to be readily available across the city. If someone is higher risk of vulnerability, is starving, is freezing, they should have a place to go where they will be safe. Period.

How hardened have we become, to allow fellow human beings to exist in this way? We have stripped people of their humanity. We must do everything we can to keep people safe, to give them dignified, private space to sleep and rest, where they can begin to experience healing, restoration, and care. We MUST move forward, not backward! What if this was your child? Your sister or brother? We must invest money and resources now for private, safe, indoor spaces. We must save the existing shelter-hotels, move people into proper long-term housing situations, and open 24/7 respite spaces now! We must act now.

Thank you for your time.