

**From:** [Atia Haq](#)  
**To:** [Economic and Community Development](#)  
**Subject:** [External Sender] My comments for 2023.EC3.13 on April 25, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee  
**Date:** April 24, 2023 9:41:25 AM

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To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the April 25, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee meeting on item 2023.EC3.13, Review of policies and procedures related to Warming Centres

My name is Atia Haq, and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to submit comments to this agenda item: 2023.EC3.13, Review of Policies and procedures related to Warming Centres. I am a community member, resident of Toronto and registered psychotherapist working at a community mental health agency supporting 2SLGBTIA+ youth existing at many intersections. I write today to urge this committee to take seriously the emergency of the homelessness and housing crisis in our city and act with the level of urgency required. At a time where there has been an unprecedented number of deaths of unhoused residents in our communities and where in March, on average 120 people were told daily that there are no shelter beds available, this is a moment where we need more spaces indoors, not less.

As a committee and City Council, it is imperative to interrogate the ways that reckless and murderous policies have furthered the organized abandonment of the most vulnerable and marginalized residents as encampments continue to be violently evicted, hotel-shelters continue to close, warming centre programs shut down, and the threat of any sort of winter plans in the city losing funding without provincial and federal support. The ongoing dehumanization of our unhoused neighbours, community members and friends is unacceptable. As someone in community and relationship with many people existing at the intersections of racialization, mental illness, disability, queer and transness and poverty, we are steeped in a grief and loss that is heavy and endless. It is horrifying to know that in a city as wealthy as Toronto, where the budget for police and policing continues to rise, that people are literally left out in the cold to freeze to death or suffer irreparable injury and harm. There are at least 18,000 unhoused people in Toronto, many of whom die before they even have a chance to access housing, where the waitlist is at least 12 years long. We have seen people forced into positions of "choosing" Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) because of the inaccessibility of housing. What kind of city have we created, where it's easier to die than to be housed? We know that Black and Indigenous residents are disproportionately harmed by this violence, that violent encampment evictions and this abandonment all happen on stolen land.

Where are people supposed to go, without fear of being violently evicted or displaced by police or private security? The City must declare homelessness an emergency, to compel other levels of government to act to address the lack of safe and accessible shelter and housing options in this city. The violent eviction and displacement of encampment residents needs to end immediately, and the

remaining hotel-shelters need to stay open where residents need to be provided with individual housing plans, not just shuttled back and forth between other hotel-shelters slated to close or to congregate settings. Respite spaces need to be accessible year-round because everyone deserves access to the necessities of survival, regardless of the weather outside.

We are in a continued global pandemic, a decades-long drug poisoning crisis, and a time where the violence and dehumanization of unhoused residents has been normalized across our city. We as a city, and you as City Councillors and the Economic and Community Development Committee cannot allow these deaths and harm to continue. People need to have a place they can go to rest, to stay warm, to exist. This is foundational to building a society where everyone is afforded their humanity. You have the power to make a difference: to let unhoused people know that they are not forgotten, that their humanity matters and to be a city that doesn't abandon its residents. Please take this responsibility seriously. Thank you for your time.

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.

Kind regards,

Atia

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*This email is being written from the traditional and ancestral territories of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, Seneca and Petun Nations, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. As a settler in Tkaronto, I am committed to disrupting colonial violence through concrete action.*