

From: [David Walsh](#)
To: [Economic and Community Development](#)
Subject: [External Sender] My comments for 2023.EC7.8 on October 24, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee
Date: October 22, 2023 10:36:30 PM

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the October 24, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee meeting on item 2023.EC7.8, Shelter System Pressures and Responses, including Planning for Winter 2023/2024

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 being Submitted to the October 24, 2023 Meeting of The [Economic and Community Development Committee](#) on

Re: The Winter plan EC7.8 - Shelter System Pressures and Responses, including Planning for Winter 2023/2024

Comments: David Walsh – david@dwalsh.ca

Planning for Winter 2023/2024 - Shelter System Pressures and Responses

St Joseph Community Ventures is a non-profit that I operate to support innovative projects. It is one of four non-profits that hold an ownership position in Carrot Common on Danforth Ave. See www.carrotcommon.com.

In 2006 I worked with friends to create a non-profit that operates 3 houses on Broadview Ave next to Loblaws – it is for men in transition from addiction treatment; and our cost of operating these homes for 28 men has been about 20% of the amount that the City is spending on hotel rooms.

I am here today, together with others concerned about the crisis of homelessness in our city, to ask the City to give immediate increased support to the churches that are on the front lines in providing shelter and housing for refugees and asylum seekers. This action will reduce the large number of refugees and asylum seekers using the City's shelter system

We know that our Federal government has to take a large part of the responsibility for this current crisis in Toronto, but we also need to remember that this is a crisis in cities across the country, due largely to the growing inequalities in our country.

We understand that the City is looking at ways to get the Federal government to fund accommodation for refugees and the Feds have been slow to live up to their responsibility. If the Federal government does not provide needed funds soon, then we must demand that the Moss Park Armoury and the Fort York Armoury be opened up.

Winter is upon us, and in order to expedite space for shelters, the City should work more closely with community non-profits organizations as they can move faster and make better use of limited funds.

I am part of a network of faith organizations who have been working with the churches that have been helping refugees from African countries, and I am impressed with the commitment and capability of those churches to provide caring models at an economical cost. But they need more support from the City. These churches are in a position to act on shelter and housing opportunities if they receive funding support from the City.

The City has been advancing some funds, but there are problems.

First, the criteria for the current grant process do not cover the work of organizations such as the Ethiopian Association that was the first to respond to the crisis at 120 Peter Street in June,

Secondly, some churches that have been the most active, such as Revivaltime, have yet to receive any funds.

Thirdly, some churches are ready to move individuals into housing and they need City support. Pilgrim's Feast is an example of a church that needs rent subsidies to lease housing for the people in its shelter. Nadine Miller at Pilgrim's Feast has worked tirelessly to welcome refugees and asylum seekers, and she has lined up landlords to provide housing at low rental rates. Nadine needs to access the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) program. If COHB rental assistance is not available to her, then the City needs to find a way now to assist these homeless refugees and asylum seekers with their housing costs.

One of the organizations in our network has a proposal to create shelters at a cost that is 30% of the cost of the hotel rooms being rented to house refugees. Also, the churches have lands for tiny homes and portables that offer short-term solutions. Last week I visited Hamilton and Kitchener to see their tiny home projects - they are playing a big part in moving individuals out of encampments; particularly those with mental health and addiction challenges.

I am here to urge the City of Toronto to work with those churches that are already assisting refugees and asylum seekers; and this will free up spaces in the shelters. And if the Federal government is not willing to commit to needed funds, then we need to demand that the Federal Government open up the Moss Park Armoury and the Fort York Armoury immediately. This was done in 1996, so we know it is possible.

And our Ontario Provincial government needs to step up and provide supports for individuals

who are being shut out of housing. We know the social costs of the status quo are enormous – in terms of the costs of crime, extra police work, the court system, hospitals, and ambulances, just to name a few. Not acting is not an option. The residential school system continued for over 100 years, and we need to work to ensure that the current homelessness catastrophe does not continue to take the lives of the most vulnerable in our city.

It is staggering to read the statistics in the recent Toronto Star editorial - they indicate that in September, the City turned away 278 people seeking shelter each night. By working more closely with faith organizations that are most willing to help the City can both provide more spaces and advocate for greater support from both the Federal and Provincial governments.

Toronto Star Editorial - Friday, October 20, 2023

Winter's coming. Why Toronto needs to do more to help its homeless residents

[And in September, the city turned away 278 people seeking shelter each night, compared to 170 per night last September](#) and just 24 per night in September 2021. To put it in even starker numbers: Of the roughly 1,000 calls a day the city received, it matched an average of less than 12 people — little more than one per cent — with shelters.

Despite this ominous situation, the city has no plans to open new shelters. Instead, it will add 180 new spaces by reducing the separation between beds. That's better than nothing, though it does increase the risk of infectious disease transmission.
