

From: [Ejay Tupe](#)
To: [Economic and Community Development](#)
Subject: [External Sender] Re: My comments for 2023.EC7.8 on October 24, 2023 Economic and Community Development Committee
Date: October 23, 2023 4:37:38 PM

Revised statement

My name is Ejay Tupe, Director of the Toronto Urban Missions Hub for the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. I have been working with marginalized populations for over 18 years and I have been coordinating response and directly assisting Dominion Church International since the first week of August.

It is problematic that upon further examination, this winter report echoes what was written from previous years. The situation of homelessness has not only changed dramatically, but has worsened especially due other crises like the African refugees and asylum seekers. Currently we have 400+ refugees between two sites (Dominion Church International and Pilgrim Feast) and there is no acknowledgement of the seriousness of the reality of African refugees, experiencing their first winter and having no additional supports leveraged for them. I urge this committee to demand a revision from the SSHA regarding this winter plan and not allow them to simply copy and paste last year's report.

Further, I am specifically advocating for additional support for the churches that have and are providing emergency shelter support (Dominion Church International and Pilgrim Feast). According to the refund portal created, each site has essentially operated out of meagre resources and their per diem rate is approximately \$19 per person according to the reimbursement program created by SSHA. If there are no additional beds to help cover the gap of the current 400+ refugees from both sites, I urge this committee to not only affirm the current situation that these two churches are covering a significant service gap, but also to give them better resources to assist them in running their operations better.

I recognize that at the moment there is no plan specifically addressing the refugees currently staying at both sites (Dominion Church and Pilgrim feast) and frankly I would rather that a better plan be utilized than my suggestion of better resourcing the churches currently responding. They are asking for a per diem rate of \$55 which will not only allow them to better serve the 400+ people on their site, but also represent significant cost savings as opposed to other programs enacted by the city and/or Federal institutions. Moreover, the cultural acuity of the black leaders responding cannot be dismissed as service provision is not limited to physical conditions only.

With winter coming, there is an urgency regarding this matter. I ask for this committee to live up to public statements made by members of this council. Chris Moise has raised concerns about the first winter for these African refugee and asylum seekers. Mayor Chow has spoken about prioritizing refugee and asylum seekers. Councillor Bravo has spoken about the high cost of running shelters. This is an opportunity for this committee to serve people over policies. To see opportunities instead of obstacles.

Please hear the voices of those speaking on behalf of their African brothers and sisters. Give them autonomy and appropriate resources to help fill the gap.

Ejay Tupe

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