



January 13, 2023

The Board of Health

Dear Chair and Members of the Board of Health,

Re: Cold weather & the effects on those experiencing homelessness

The City of Toronto is facing a sharp increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. Toronto's shelter system is unable to support the number of residents in need, placing extra pressures on the city's drop-in and warming centres. While the best Public Health outcome is to ensure all residents of Toronto have safe and secure housing, measures must be taken now to protect those individuals in need.

Recommendations:

That the Board of Health:

1. Direct the Medical Officer of Health to establish a working table, including physicians, medical experts who work with people experiencing homelessness, and people with lived experience, to conduct a review of the intersection of health and homelessness, and provide the results of the review and any recommendations to the Medical Officer of Health, for a report back to the Board at the earliest opportunity.
2. Request the Medical Officer of Health to support the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration in their review of all policies and procedures related to the opening and operations of Emergency Warming Centres as directed in Item 2023.EC1.9.
3. Recommend that City Council declare a public health crisis in the City of Toronto based on systemic failure of all three levels of government to provide adequate 24-hour, drop-in and respite indoor spaces, and call for the immediate provision of safe, accessible 24-hour respite spaces that are accessible through walk-in access.
4. Recommend that Toronto City Council direct the General Manager, Shelter Support and Housing Administration to provide 24/7 indoor warming locations until April 15, 2023, possibly including City of Toronto Warming Centres, and locations provided by community organizations, including faith-based groups, that would provide low-barrier, walk-in access to people in need of a safe place to spend the night.

Sincerely,

Councillor Ausma Malik
Ward 10
Spadina-Fort York

Councillor Alejandra Bravo
Ward 9
Davenport

Councillor Gord Perks
Ward 4
Parkdale-High Park