

**From:** [Diane Chester](#)  
**To:** [Board of Health](#)  
**Cc:** [Mayor Chow](#); [Councillor Malik](#); [Adelaide](#); [Gordon Tanner](#)  
**Subject:** [External Sender] HL8.1 - Our Health, Our City: A Mental Health, Substance Use, Harm Reduction and Treatment Strategy for Toronto  
**Date:** November 23, 2023 12:32:42 PM

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Dear Members of the Board of Health,

Niagara Neighbours for Community Safety (NNCS) is a group of hundreds of parents, residents, and businesses in the downtown west area of Toronto. We came together after learning in mid-September, through a rumour and not from the City of Toronto, that a 24-hour low barrier respite would be sited in the heart of our neighbourhood at 629 Adelaide Street West and would open early 2024.

First of all, thank you for your work and your commitment, through this new strategy, to try to resolve the mental health and addiction issues in our city. We live near Queen and Bathurst Streets where there are multiple social services agencies and a supervised consumption site. We have been acutely aware of these tragedies for some time now — it is not new to our neighbourhood.

On Thursday, November 16, 2023, our community was suddenly advised that a 24-hour shelter/emergency shelter (terms used interchangeably) would be sited at 629 Adelaide Street West — rather than a 24-hour low barrier respite site. We did not support the respite site at this location and are unaware as to why the City of Toronto changed the purpose of the site. The entire process has been shrouded in secrecy and a lack of transparency.

And while the City of Toronto was adamant our community had no input into the process, due to delegated authority, they then advised us they changed the purpose of the site as a result of our “feedback” — without a formal engagement process. We have no documentation from the City of Toronto as to whose input was considered and what precipitated the sudden change. All we have encountered throughout this “process” is confusion, a lack of transparency, a lack of professionalism, and misinformation. As a result, we have no trust or confidence in the City of Toronto’s abilities to safely manage any facility of this type where we live. The plan now is for 50 beds, or more, at 629 Adelaide Street West. It’s a small parcel of land with no outdoor space, in the heart of a residential community where there are children, schools, families, homes, laneways, dead end areas, and multiple parking lots — **it’s an unsafe location.**

Our community is on public record advising the Mayor, all Members of City Council, senior City of Toronto staff and other jurisdictions that locating these services and programs in our neighbourhood is reckless, dangerous, and will seriously impact public safety.

You are planning additional 24-hour respite sites and shelters throughout the city. Stop using the delegated authority — it is dangerous and undemocratic, creates secrecy, misunderstandings, frustration, fear, anger, and conflict. It does not build safe, secure, welcoming, and livable communities in Toronto. Work with communities; not against them.

Thank you,

Diane Chester  
Niagara Neighbours for Community Safety