



African Canadian Collective (ACC)
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December 16, 2024

To: Mayor Olivia Chow & Members of City Council

City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Subject: Formal Request to Adopt Ombudsman Toronto Recommendations Regarding Refugee Claimant Access to Shelter Services

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of City Council,

We, the African Canadian Collective (hereafter “ACC”), are writing to you regarding the City of Toronto’s refusal to adopt the recommendations outlined in the Toronto Ombudsman’s report on the exclusion of refugee claimants from the City’s base shelter system. The ACC (composed of over 20 Black Founded, Black-led, Black-serving and Black-focus agencies) wants to express our disappointment and the complete disregard of the Global & Canadian Human Rights Charter. Furthermore, we are deeply troubled by the City’s failure to uphold the [United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent](#)’s call for action to address issues impacting People of African Descent— declared in January of 2015, adopted by the [Canadian government](#) in 2015, and recently extended until 2028, which recognizes people of African descent (**including African newcomers**) as a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.

This decision undermines principles of fairness, equity, and transparency, which are foundational to the City’s commitment to serving all residents, including its most vulnerable.

The Ombudsman’s report, released on December 12, 2024, details clear and actionable recommendations to address the systemic failures that led to the exclusion of refugee claimants. These recommendations include:

- Ensuring transparency and equity in decision-making processes related to shelter access.
- Engaging in meaningful consultations with impacted communities and agencies.
- Reviewing existing shelter system policies to prevent exclusionary practices.
- Aligning shelter access policies with the City’s commitment to human rights and Confronting Anti-Black Racism;
<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-black-racism/>
- In addition the City’s requirement to provide universal access as articulated in the AccessTO policy.

The findings of the report are not only a reflection of the challenges within the shelter system but also a roadmap for change. As elected officials, you hold a pivotal role in upholding Toronto's reputation as a city committed to equity, human rights, and fairness.

We respectfully request that Council:

- Publicly commit to implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations in full.
- Establish a detailed implementation plan with timelines, accountability measures, and clear milestones.
- Engage stakeholders and community organizations to ensure inclusive and transparent execution of these recommendations.

Failure to act on these recommendations not only perpetuates systemic inequities but also risks undermining the City's credibility and its obligations under the [Toronto Ombudsman Act](#), the [City of Toronto Act](#), and [international human rights standards](#).

The exclusion of refugee claimants from shelter services has resulted in severe harm to African newcomers who are among the most vulnerable residents. We urge you to recognize the moral, legal, and social implications of allowing this injustice to persist.

We request a response to this letter no later than Thursday, December 19th, confirming your commitment to implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations. Should we not receive a satisfactory response, we will have no choice but to explore alternative avenues to ensure accountability and action, including but not limited to engaging City Council, filing complaints with oversight bodies, and seeking legal remedies.

We remain hopeful that the city will act swiftly and decisively in addressing this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Kizito Musabimana



On behalf of the African Canadian Collective (ACC)



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CC:

Office of the Toronto Ombudsman

Members of City Council

Budget Committee

Toronto and East York Community Council

Advocacy and Community Organization

Member Agencies:

The African Canadian Collective is a dynamic network of organizations, each contributing distinct expertise and essential resources to advance our shared mission:

No. Member Agencies (subject to change based on evolving needs and demands):

- 1 The [Rwandan Canadian Healing Centre \(RCHC\)](#)
- 2 The [Ethiopian Association in the Greater Toronto Area and Surrounding Regions](#)
- 3 [The African Centre for Refugees in Ontario Canada](#)
- 4 [The Beautiful Foundation \(Revivaltime\)](#)
- 5 The PFT Feast on Wheels ([Pilgrim Feast Tabernacles Church](#))
- 6 The Dominion House of Hope ([Dominion Church International of Toronto](#))
- 7 The [Uganda Muslim Association Of Canada \(UMAC\)](#)
- 8 [Finch Ave Community Center](#)
- 9 [Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth](#)
- 10 [Miracle Arena Church/Shelter](#)
- 11 My [Brother's Keeper Parkdale](#)
- 12 The [Network for the Advancement of Black Communities \(NABC\)](#)
- 13 [Anchor Canada](#)
- 14 Rosebox Consulting
- 15 DICE - Diverse Inclusive Community for Everyone
- 16 MOZIA Women's Network Society
- 17 [New Nakfa](#)
- 18 [Kenyan Canadian Association \(KCA\)](#)
- 19 [Ghanaian Canadian Association of Ontario \(GCAO\)](#)
- 20 411 Central
- 21 [La Passerelle-IDE](#)

The African Canadian Collective (ACC) is committed to ensuring African refugees can readily access the resources they need—such as culturally responsive healthcare, quality education, stable housing, and fair employment—to fully integrate into Canadian society. By leveraging the combined expertise of our member agencies and implementing evidence-based, collaborative initiatives, we are laying a solid foundation for systemic reforms that uplift, empower, and strengthen African Canadians nationwide.