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To: [Economic and Community Development](#); premier@ontario.ca; [Mayor Chow](#); [Councillor Malik](#); [Vuong, Kevin - M.P.](#); [Portugal Square Adelaide West](#); chris.glover@ontariondp.ca; CGlover-CO@ndp.on.ca; [Paul Johnson \(City Manager\)](#); [Gordon Tanner](#); [Clerk](#)
Subject: [External Sender] EC17.4-Shelter Safety Action Plan and Contract Amendments related to Lodging for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, and Community Safety Team Services
Date: November 24, 2024 8:10:14 PM

Dear Chair Bravo and ECDC Committee Members,

We fully acknowledge the mental health, addiction, and homelessness crisis, however, the shelter siting process is deeply flawed, marked by what our neighbourhood perceives as a pompous, secretive, and condescending attitude toward valid concerns about facility management and public safety. Case in point: EC17.4 is 61 pages with a three-year “Safety Action Plan” (with many actions not implemented) addressing serious violence in shelters, yet no discussion regarding neighbourhood public safety merely tokenized and buried in the final paragraph of this Toronto Shelter and Support Services-drafted City of Toronto report.

What’s truly baffling is how disingenuously the term “community” is used by the City of Toronto and our politicians. It is invoked almost exclusively to refer to individuals in need of crisis mental health care, addiction services, or housing assistance. Yet, at the same time, the City and our politicians constantly praise “neighbourhoods” (also referred to as communities when convenient)—yet show no genuine interest in meaningfully engaging with or supporting neighbourhoods when it comes to siting shelters. Neighbourhoods are considered a significant nuisance yet it is in fact where shelters are sited. It’s an appalling and contradictory process.

As a result, there will be continued opposition as 20 more shelters are sited in Toronto neighbourhoods. The closure of 10 supervised consumption sites reflects the mismanagement, lack of process, public safety, transparency, and genuine community engagement—paralleling the scaled back drug-decriminalization policy in British Columbia.

Our neighbourhood first learned of the 24-hour emergency shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West (initially planned as a 24-hour low-barrier respite site) through a rumour in August 2023. Since then, we have received no clear or transparent information about what to expect regarding public safety or facility management. St. Felix Centre, a service operator with no experience managing a 24-hour emergency shelter, planned to open this multi-million dollar 50-bed (originally 80) site in November 2023 but has yet to do so. Despite claims of extreme urgency last winter, the site remains

leased but closed.

Evidence and neighbour testimonials reveal serious mismanagement at 25 Augusta Avenue, a respite site managed by St. Felix Centre. Neighbourhood concerns were ignored, with frequent crime, violence, and open drug use occurring next to homes and families.

With regards to safety around 629 Adelaide Street West, a number of neighbours have been advised by the Toronto Police Service to take critical steps in installing a broad range of security measures on their private properties due to the shelter. Many people in our neighbourhood live alone, are seniors, non-English speakers, persons with a disability, yet only a handful of people are being told to increase security. Have these critical safety recommendations been shared consistently and widely? When Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) General Manager Gord Tanner was recently confronted with this information, his response was: “that is not helpful” (referring to Toronto Police Services security recommendations), but with no further explanation.

What we observe at Toronto shelters, respites, encampments, and supervised consumption sites is social chaos with no meaningful oversight. Community Safety Teams are now being presented as the default solution for neighbourhoods impacted by these facilities. However, their roles, training, and background checks remain opaque to residents, raising serious questions about third parties now required to “police” our neighbourhoods.

For instance, at the Parkdale Queen West Supervised Consumption Site (168 Bathurst Street), Community Safety Teams de-escalate violence and monitor for overdoses but do not address open drug and alcohol use or drug dealing. Our neighbourhood routinely witnesses screaming, violence, fights, people languishing in alleys, drug dealing, open drug and alcohol use, and intimidation, even though Community Safety Teams are present.

What should our neighbourhood expect at 629 Adelaide Street West, in the heart of a residential neighbourhood, surrounded by homes, near schools, private property, and historic Portugal Square?

At a recent standing room only public meeting at the Waterfront Community Centre (627 Queens Quay West) regarding the Little Norway Park encampment, a resident

voiced her serious concerns about the planned shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West. TSSS General Manager Gord Tanner responded by suggesting she see a therapist and referenced his own mental health issues—whether sincerely or sarcastically remains unclear. This exemplifies the ongoing dismissive attitude toward critical neighbourhood concerns.

At each public meeting we attend, the responsibility for responding to what occurs outside shelters and at encampments is placed on neighbourhoods, where residents are presented with a complex flow chart of agencies and multiple phone numbers of "who to call" and for multiple reasons. This leaves seniors, persons with a disability, and non-English-speaking residents extremely vulnerable. Is this information shared widely and in multiple languages? Do people answering these calls have access to TTY and translation services? It's an appalling, dangerous, and inconsistent process.

At another recent public meeting at Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre, held by Toronto Police Service 14 Division (where not a single Councillor was in attendance), a senior living across from the Little Norway Park encampment expressed her fears to walk her dog. An outing she previously enjoyed and an opportunity to socialize with her neighbourhood that now leaves her anxious. And, at this meeting there was a report of a neighbour being attacked by an intruder in their own building with the possibility of losing sight in one eye. There were multiple stories of people feeling intimidated and extremely unsafe—in a neighbourhood that had never felt unsafe until the encampment arrived.

At this meeting, the police informed us that 14 Division handles the most emergencies in the city. They recommended we carry a whistle, wear reflective clothing, and document incidents in a notebook. However, when it came to policing at these sites, they emphasized that their hands were tied and that there was a lack of resources. None of this is reassuring.

What is our neighbourhood to expect if the 24-hour emergency shelter opens at 629 Adelaide Street West—will we be confined to our homes due to a lack of resources, poor facility management, and a lack of public safety measures? Will violence and open drug use move into the heart of our neighbourhood? These are very serious questions with no concrete answers.

For over a year, our neighbourhood has submitted hundreds of letters to Mayor Chow, Deputy Mayor/Councillor Malik, City of Toronto senior staff, many Committees,

and Council expressing serious concerns about the siting of the planned shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West. Our **GoFundMe** [page https://www.gofundme.com/f/stoptheshelter-629adelaidestw](https://www.gofundme.com/f/stoptheshelter-629adelaidestw) outlines our significant concerns with this landlocked planned shelter site.

Siting a 24-hour emergency shelter with no outdoor space, surrounded by asphalt, city boulevards, a busy road and bike lane—directly beside homes, 54 metres from one elementary school, and 235 metres from another—is reckless. If this site opens and needles, pipes, and drug paraphernalia are distributed in the heart of our neighbourhood, it will cause irreparable harm.

We have repeatedly raised these concerns on public record and continue to oppose the siting of this shelter due to the lack of process, transparency, public safety, and genuine community engagement. To date, we have received no clear or effective response.

Stop the siting of this shelter for the safety and well-being of our community and our neighbourhood.

Jennifer Hilsden