

## Board of Health

**48 communications with similar text were received between Sunday, July 7, 2024 at 3:41 p.m. and Monday, July 8, 12:15 p.m.**

To: Board of Health <boh@toronto.ca>

RE: Toronto Agenda Item 2024.HL14.1

RE: Toronto Agenda Item 2024.HL14.1 — Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan 2024-2028

To: Board of Health

Re: Toronto Agenda Item 2024.HL14.1 — Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan 2024-2028

Thank you for considering the serious concerns of our neighbourhood regarding Toronto Public Health's Strategic Plan (2024-2028) and the siting of a 24-hour emergency shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West. Our neighbourhood's experience with the mental health and toxic opioid crisis exemplifies the very difficult challenges posed by the proposed shelter location.

**Background:** The proposed site for the 24-hour emergency shelter presents a troubling scenario unlike any other in Toronto. Our neighbourhood, near Queen Street West and Bathurst Street, faces the convergence of a proposed shelter, a supervised-consumption site, and numerous social services in close proximity to two elementary schools and residential areas surrounded by laneways. This clustering raises legitimate public safety and public health concerns.

**Lack of accountability and engagement:** Over the past 11 months, our neighbourhood's public safety concerns have been consistently dismissed despite efforts to engage senior City of Toronto staff and Councillor Malik through various channels. Despite hundreds of residents voicing their concerns through petitions, deputations, meetings, and letters to City Council, the Community Economic and Development Committee, Executive Committee, and the Board of Health, there has been no proactive outreach from City of Toronto officials to even acknowledge our issues. At least 50% of the individuals who will access the proposed shelter will have mental health and addiction issues, and a significant portion will be refugees—a convergence posing serious risks without support is reckless, as we have consistently voiced on public record.

**Toronto Public Health's Strategic Plan (2024-2028):** What you won't see in our neighbourhood around Queen and Bathurst Streets—on sidewalks, in laneways, and near the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre safe-consumption site—are:

- 1) Public health interventions that respond to the drugs toxicity epidemic.
- 2) Public health services that are trauma-informed and reduce stigma.
- 3) Public health interventions that promote mental health.

Instead, what you will witness are:

- 1) Ongoing overdoses due to the drug toxicity epidemic.

2) Individuals in severe drug-induced comas on sidewalks and in alleys, lacking urgent public health assistance directly beside a Community Health Centre.

3) Severe neglect and suffering due to inadequate support for mental health, addiction, and recovery services needed to help people rebuild their lives.

As Dr. Vincent Lam eloquently stated in a recent Globe and Mail article titled 'The House of Recovery,' we need to effectively assemble resources to support and establish a robust foundation for treatment and recovery. “Too many resources are like joints and beams lying haphazardly around a building site. They need to be properly assembled to support one another, and ultimately a solid house of treatment and recovery.” The decision to site a 24-hour emergency shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West is just that—joints and beams lying haphazardly.

In fact, the City of Toronto’s decision to lease 629 Adelaide Street West was a desperate measure, prompted by failed negotiations at 65 Bellwoods Avenuedue to neighbourhood public safety concerns, despite the latter being half the size. This process has demonstrated a clear lack of project management, evidence-based decision-making, and financial oversight. Originally planned to open in November 2023, this multimillion-dollar, 50-bed facility remains closed.

Jen Carson recently stated in a Globe and Mail article titled 'When Conspiracy Theories are Right,': “To hold a position of influence or power is to serve the public, not demand its silence. Those in leadership must earn trust daily through their actions, words, and habits. If trust is lost, blame lies not with the people, but with the institutions themselves.” Our neighbourhood has faced name-calling, threats, a lack of engagement and accountability regarding our public safety concerns amidst a homeless, mental health, and toxic opioid crisis. These ongoing failures highlight systemic issues in government policy, eroding our trust and faith in our elected officials and institutions.

A profound public health crisis is literally on our doorstep without any support or acknowledgement from our public health officials. The 24-hour emergency shelter will not be safe for the people in the shelter, the staff and the surrounding community. It is a reckless process and a reckless public health decision and we are, once again, on public record advising you of this.

**From:**

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