

New Etobicoke Centre Shelter Public Consultation – by Councillor Stephen Holyday, seconded by Councillor Vincent Crisanti

Date: June 30, 2025

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: City Council

Wards: 2

CITY COUNCIL DECISION

City Council on June 25 and 26, 2025, referred Motion MM31.10 to the Economic and Community Development Committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Stephen Holyday, seconded by Councillor Vincent Crisanti, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the City Manager to pause the real estate transaction for the new shelter in Ward 2 pending the outcome of community consultation.
2. City Council authorize the immediate public release of the location and details of the new shelter in Ward 2.
3. City Council direct the City Manager to report back to City Council by the end of 2025 on a new shelter delegation of authority and community consultation model which ensures that members of the public and members of Council have meaningful opportunity to participate in consultation and decision making, and that explicit authority regarding shelter locations rests with City Council.

SUMMARY

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On Thursday May 29th 2025, staff of Toronto Shelter and Support Services, and Corporate Real Estate Management provided me a verbal statement of their intention to open a new homeless shelter in Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre. This is the second shelter to be located in the ward.

On Friday May 30th, 2025, staff confirmed their intentions along with some basic information in writing, including a real estate transaction closing date in the future. They advised me that the details, including the location, were confidential and commercially sensitive. On the same day I sent a letter to the public service advising of my objections to the shelter, and insisted that the shelter real estate transaction be paused so that the community may be meaningfully consulted prior to the City government committing to the decision.

On June 11th, 2025, I received a follow-up contact from staff indicating that after my letter to them, they had decided to accelerate the real estate transaction closing date, and that they had taken an intentional specific step on June 5th to commit to the real estate transaction. This information came as a surprise, and was in complete defiance of my response letter. One of the effects of accelerating the date results in a limit to the ability and utility of any public input on the new shelter because of the status of the real estate transaction.

In 2017, City Council delegated certain authority to staff in support of efficient administration of the City's shelter system. Implicit in this decision, as later more broadly understood, is the ability for staff to open a shelter without agreement from members of Council or explicit direction. However, nothing in the delegation precludes advance community consultation, if so desired. Much has changed since that delegation, both in the world and with the City administration. There is a new shelter infrastructure plan and approach, findings by the Auditor General, competing demands, and a deeper expectation by the public to be involved in decisions which affect them.

As details of the new shelter are revealed to the public by the servants who master them, I have every expectation that trust in the municipal government by the public will be eroded further. The purpose of this motion is to try and right this course.

New shelters which omit public consultation in the early stages and commence under heavy opposition in the community start out with a disadvantage. They will face a long road of acceptance within the community, and will likely face more challenges as they operate. The City would be wise to find a better way from the beginning.

The Toronto Public Service has disclosed plans to me that conflict with the best interests of the constituents of Ward 2, they have decided not to seek input from the affected community before moving ahead, and ignored my advice. They have also censured my ability to provide timely information necessary to advance the interests of constituents, and to promote transparency and accountability in decision making. Council has the authority to fix this immediately.

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Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM31.10

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-256538.pdf>

Attachment 1 - Letter from Councillor Stephen Holyday, Ward 2 - Etobicoke Centre

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-256558.pdf>

Communications (City Council)

(June 25, 2025) E-mail from Nicole Corrado (MM.New)

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