



July 14, 2025

Attn: Councillor Gord Perks (Chair) and Members of Planning and Housing Committee

Re: Item PH23.3 - Advancing Six Sites for the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) - City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Six Zoning By-law Amendments - Decision Report - Approval

Dear Chair Perks and Members of Planning and Housing Committee,

Hi, my name is Asil Lavoie. I have experienced homelessness off and on for 35 years. I was diagnosed 32 years ago with MS and fibromyalgia, and PTSD 3 years ago.

City council must act aggressively and build new shelters immediately. I support the proposed amendments.

I currently live in a shelter, on the west side of the city. People with disabilities like myself are often treated as if our needs are an extra burden. As if we are not people who should have choice or dignity in our daily life. It is as if people do not recognize us as full humans – with skills and gifts.

I am an executive member of the Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union. I am a volunteer. I have worked for nonprofit organizations. I watch out for my friends and take care of people. I am a human, and yet, I feel like I am constantly fighting for myself and for my friends to experience basic dignity.

It has been very difficult to get into a shelter. And once you are in, you feel very stuck. It takes 2 hours on transit one way just to get to this meeting today. You could have a serious safety issue with someone at or near the shelter, and it doesn't matter – you are stuck. You have no options.

Physically, I can't work much due to my conditions. I worked a part time job recently, which was the maximum I could do. I was a peer worker, and helped people get harm reduction supplies, gave them a listening ear, and helped them get support. I did a good job at this role. But even if that job paid DOUBLE what I made, I could never have made enough to live on to be able to move out on my own. The only possibility for housing that I have is to get very lucky and get into a subsidy program that will cover most of the cost of my rent, or to get into supportive housing or TCHC, both of which have waitlists for many years. The income I have on ODSP doesn't even cover my basic needs, let alone help me get on my feet and get housed.

Every step we take feels like an uphill battle, with extra hoops to jump through just to access the simplest forms of support. It took me a whole year to get approved for ODSP, requiring countless appointments and repeated proof of my disabilities.

Things have gotten worse over the years. Many programs and supports we relied on have disappeared, leaving us with very few options.

People with disabilities – and all people who are unhoused – deserve shelter and ultimately, housing! It is the very least we need to live a good life. We are not a burden in our communities, we are an asset. We must see city council aggressively act – immediately building shelters and deeply affordable housing. Our lives depend on it.

Sincerely,

Asil Lavoie