

To: Economic and Community Development Committee
Date: July 15 2025
Re: 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

I'm here on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, a collective impact initiative committed to ending homelessness in Toronto. We work with both the community and the City on homelessness system planning and were part of one of the many consultations on the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy.

I'm speaking today in strong support of the recommendations to amend the Official Plan and the Zoning By-laws so that the important work of delivering 420 new shelter beds on these sites can begin without delay.

The HSCIS represents an urgent, well researched, and needs-based response to address Toronto's deepening homelessness crisis. As the Street Needs Assessment has shown us, over 15,000 people in Toronto are experiencing homelessness - more than double the number from just a few years ago. Our shelter system is overwhelmed, and affordable housing is disappearing with an alarming 15:1 affordable rental replacement rate – despite the City's own 1:1 Rental Replacement Policy.

Homelessness is not a neighbourhood issue for negotiation – it is a City-wide human rights emergency. And with the decommissioning of unsustainable shelter hotel programs, the HSICS moves to fill an imminent and critical gap for people who are left with nowhere to turn, and who deserve supports and services in all neighbourhoods of this City – because homelessness is found in all neighbourhoods of this City.

One of the most commendable aspects of the HSCIS initiative is the use of the Zoning By-law Amendments that allow for flexibility in the final design and built form. This approach is efficient and forward-thinking, allowing projects to incorporate feedback from expert service delivery agencies and community members, while still moving ahead with the speed and clarity that the housing and homelessness crisis demands.

All six of these sites are already zoned for municipal shelters as-of-right, but these amendments will allow the sites to accommodate site-specific performance standards

that will advance the transformation of Toronto's shelter system towards a more dignified, equitable, and housing-focused system.

The proposed amendments reflect thoughtful planning for the future. By allowing for the construction of buildings and additions that are designed for future conversion into affordable or supportive housing, City staff is wisely ensuring that today's decisions support tomorrow's needs. This is a smart, long-term use of land that will yield lasting benefits for generations.

Robust public engagement efforts - including thousands of emails and phone calls, and dozens of stakeholder and public consultation meetings - have provided City staff and elected officials with the community and expert input leading to the decision to move forward on these sites. We cannot afford to derail the essential infrastructure that supports our community's most vulnerable residents.

City Council has already adopted a rights-based approach to housing, and this means prioritizing need, and treating shelter as an essential social infrastructure that makes our communities safer, for everyone.

We strongly urge the Committee to support all the staff recommendations and move forward decisively, with continued funding strategies to ensure these sites are ready to deliver on their promise.

Thank you,

Savhanna J Wilson

Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness