

October 29, 2025

ATTN: Planning and Housing Committee
Re: PH25.3 Community Within Reach: Expanding
Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON)
Neighbourhood Retail and Services Study

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

I am writing to you today as a Toronto resident, local street photographer, and the individual behind the civics-oriented multi-media project Another Glass Box.

Part of this project involves trying to walk every street in Toronto. This has allowed me to see just how positive and impactful existing neighbourhood retail is and how it elevates the communities in which it is present (see a selection of my photos embedded in this letter). It is through this project that I came across Finch Store, a small corner store that was potentially facing closure over an anonymous complaint and their installation of an espresso machine. I took their cause online with a petition that also included language in support of EHON's neighbourhood retail initiative to tell the City how much signatories love these types of stores and that we want regulation and enforcement that allows them to thrive.

The public's reaction was immediate and intense. Within five days and a mass of media coverage, the local councilor announced that any decision regarding the store was deferred. It was obvious that supporters had made their voices heard in favour of this kind of local and community-oriented retail. In fact, it seemed to many of us that the matter was settled. Yet here we are, with approval still pending and Finch Store in limbo. So for the committee's consideration I want to issue the following items into the record:

- [A live link to the petition](#) mentioned above—as of the submission of this letter, **the number of signatories has surpassed 2600** (in the interest of privacy and clarity, I will be emailing the full list of signatories to the committee in a separate communication to this public letter). I anticipate it will grow even more and will not be closing the petition until a decision on this topic has been made.
- [Coverage of the Jane's Walk tour](#) I held in collaboration with More Neighbours in support of this initiative. I offered to run this walk again last weekend in support of this item and had to offer three different time slots due to demand—in total we have had over 200 people participate in these tours.
- A link to [YourLocal.Store](#), an online database I've created to document and map the wonderful neighbourhood institutions we love. In addition to the stores I've stumbled on during my project, it also serves as an open submission portal, allowing individuals to share their own neighbourhood favourites.





I don't think that the thousands of people who have come together to sign the petition, attended the tours, or simply shop at existing neighbourhood retailers are overly concerned about the specifics of this policy. While those can be worked out as needed, all of us have seen the benefits of neighbourhood retail that originated without the governance of granular policy. For these businesses to succeed they have to cultivate a customer base of loyal local regulars, enticing them with desired goods/services and neighbourly behaviour. Contemporary factors, like the emergence of online retail, make this doubly true. Locals vote with their feet—with or without regulation, the future of these stores is determined by owner/operator behaviour and local response to their presence.

So work out the details, but don't forget the big picture. Focus on intent and outcomes. Remember how many people—from the respondents to the city's own surveys to the signatories of my petition—want an outcome that allows for what we already know is so valued and cherished.

I am very hopeful that we will see this matter settled and a new wave of great local community services, third spaces, and opportunities will emerge across our Toronto. I hope you will contribute to that future at committee.

Thank you for your time,

Dan Seljak | @anotherglassbox
anotherglassbox.com | yourlocal.store

From: [Dan Seljak](#)
To: [Planning and Housing](#); [Councillor Perks](#); [Councillor Myers](#); [Councillor Crisanti](#); [Councillor Bradford](#); [Councillor Matlow](#); [Councillor Nunziata](#)
Cc: [Mayor Chow](#); [Councillor Bravo](#)
Subject: [External Sender] Further comments and Petition Submission for 2025.PH25.3 on October 30, 2025 Planning and Housing Committee
Date: October 29, 2025 5:33:04 PM
Attachments: [2025.PH25.3 Dan Seljak letter.pdf](#)
[petition_signatures_jobs_490096043_20251029210710.csv.xlsx](#)

To the City Clerk:

This is a supplement to my initial comments submitted to the agenda for the October 30, 2025 Planning and Housing Committee meeting on item 2025.PH25.3, Community Within Reach: Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON) Neighbourhood Retail and Services Study - Phase Three Final Report

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees.

I have also attached a list of petition participants who have not all consented to have their names publicised--Change.org does not allow me to make that distinction, so please do not post its contents publicly.

For the committee members' reference, I have also attached the letter that's already been included and shared online, so there is no need to share that again.

Sorry for being precious, and thank you so much.

I also understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

To Councillors/Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

I am sharing with you the names of **2722 signatories** [of a petition in support of neighbourhood retail across the City](#), with an emphasis on how the status quo puts a currently operating and beloved retailer, The Finch Store, at risk of closure.

In addition to what I'm sharing, a few notes:

- Since I wrote the letter attached this morning, nearly 100 people have signed the petition--that number will be even larger when I provide an updated figure at my deputation tomorrow

- The running tally can be seen through the live link above and included in the attached letter
- The petition today has been shared by everyone from tech executives, students, parents, professional planners, and activists--this initiative has diverse and broad support
- My 2 PM post encouraging people to sign the petition already has 12k impressions and is accelerating: <https://x.com/anotherglassbox/status/1983595039042498974>
- To give you a sense of that acceleration, in the time it took to write this email, the Excel attached became out of date by 23 signatures

Thank you all for your consideration of this petition and the associated letter. I look forward to the conversation tomorrow.

Best,

Dan Seljak