



April 21, 2026

Letter of Deposition: Opposition to Item PH29.5

To: Nancy Martins, City Clerk's Office

Attention: Toronto City Council

Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Item PH29.5 – Advancing the City's Affordable Housing Access System

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of Toronto City Council,

I am writing on behalf of **Trade Routes Canada** to express our opposition to the proposed implementation framework for the Centralized Affordable Rental Housing Access System. While we support the goal of housing transparency, the current proposal threatens the specialized referral models that the Toronto music and arts communities rely on for stability.

Concerns Regarding the Proposed Framework

The report treats sector-specific housing as an "exception" rather than a standard. Requiring project-by-project Council approval for targeted allocations introduces political uncertainty that undermines developer confidence and jeopardizes the viability of housing projects tailored to the arts. Furthermore, the music and arts community was not meaningfully engaged in a genuine co-design process, falling short of the standard Council directed in 2022.

The Economic Urgency of the Creative Workforce

Toronto's culture sector is a massive economic driver, contributing approximately **\$28 billion to Ontario's GDP**. However, the workers behind this engine face a critical market failure:

- **The Income Gap:** Artist income is **43% lower** than the overall labour force (\$27k vs. \$48k).
- **The "Gig" Barrier:** **52% of artists are self-employed**, causing them to fail standard income screenings despite being economically active.
- **Displacement Risk:** Losing this workforce threatens the **\$3.9 billion Live Performance sector**, which requires artist proximity to the urban core.

Summary of Recommended Actions

Trade Routes Canada respectfully requests the City Council to:

1. Refer the item back to staff for a genuine consultation with creative sector stakeholders.
2. Expand Delegated Authority to allow the Executive Director of the Housing Secretariat to approve targeted allocations for key workers, without project-by-project Council motions.
3. Defer implementation until 2027/2028 to allow for a pilot project and proper transition planning.

We must ensure that Toronto's new access system protects the diversity and economic productivity of our city's cultural ecosystem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Owen".

Michael Owen
Executive Director
Trade Routes Canada
music@traderoutes.ca