



RE LETTER OF SUPPORT: Church Street Pedestrianization Pilot

From: Tom Spence

To: The Toronto & East York Community Council

Channel: Written Letter

April 30, 2026

On behalf of The 519, I am writing to express our strong support for the Church Street Pedestrianization Pilot in the heart of the Church-Wellesley Village.

For five decades, The 519 has been a place where 2SLGBTQ+ communities gather, connect, organize, and care for one another. Every day, we witness how vital inclusive and accessible public spaces are to the well-being of our communities—especially for those who experience marginalization, isolation, or barriers to belonging.

Church Street is more than a corridor for movement. It is a living, cultural spine of Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ communities. It is a place where people come to celebrate, to be visible, and to find one another, and a place where queer and trans owned and operated businesses may flourish.

The proposed pilot represents a thoughtful and necessary step towards reimagining Church Street as a people-centred space. By prioritizing pedestrians, accessibility, and community use, the project aligns with the local community's desire to have a well-animated and lively hub that provides social and economic opportunities to residents and visitors to the Village.

We are especially encouraged by the pilot's emphasis on:

- Enhancing safety by reducing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles;
- Expanding accessible space for community programming, cultural expression, and informal gathering;
- Supporting local businesses through increased foot traffic and vibrant street life;
- Advancing the City of Toronto's broader goals related to climate action and people-first urban design.

As a community anchor located just steps from the Northern end of the closure, The 519 understands both the opportunities and the responsibilities that come with stewarding shared public space.

We recognize that thoughtful implementation will be essential. Ensuring accessibility, maintaining emergency access, and supporting local residents and businesses must remain core priorities throughout the pilot. We are confident that, with strong collaboration, these considerations can be meaningfully addressed.

At its heart, this initiative is about more than a temporary street closure. It is about creating space for belonging, for visibility, and for community life to unfold in ways that reflect the vibrancy and values of this city.

We urge Council to support the Church Street Pedestrianization Pilot and to work in partnership with community organizations, residents, and businesses to ensure its success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Spence", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Spence
Chair of the Board of Management
The 519