

The Right Reverend
ANDREW J. ASBIL

Bishop of Toronto



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

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His Worship John Tory
Mayor of Toronto
City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

March 31, 2020

Dear Mr. Tory,

We are heartened to see your recent announcement that the City of Toronto is pursuing the acquisition of hotels and vacant residential buildings to provide safe shelter for people experiencing homelessness. We commend your Council and staff for this important measure to safeguard the health and dignity of Toronto's most vulnerable individuals. Shelter conditions, with many people sharing a common space and a limited number of bathroom and shower facilities, are highly conducive to the rapid spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. In addition, many homeless people are inherently at high risk of developing serious complications due to their age and underlying medical conditions. With restaurants, libraries, community centres and drop-in programs closed, homeless people have been forced into even riskier situations simply to ensure their survival. For these reasons, our Social Justice and Advocacy Committee, as well as many clergy and lay Anglicans, have supported the call for immediate opening of hotel rooms and the provision of permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness.

We recognize that the City had already taken steps to reduce the number of individuals per shelter and to extend shelter operating hours to include daytime use. Many of our parishes and ministry partners, throughout the city and beyond, continue to offer meals to go, food hampers, and other outreach services to those in need, often with a skeleton staff and volunteers. They do this at great risk to their own safety. They do it because thousands of people have no adequate housing. Several of our parishes within the City of Toronto had also offered their spaces to the City as provisional shelters at a time when it seemed that this might be helpful and the risks could be minimized. As people who take seriously the call to serve those in need as Christ Himself, we are always willing to offer whatever we can to help meet the needs of vulnerable and marginalized people.

However, we also recognize that shelter space, even with increased physical distancing, is far from ideal in terms of protecting the health of shelter guests, staff and the broader population. As the City has now determined, housing people in individual units is a better solution. Today's announcement of 650 units acquired, with a further 500 to be added, is a welcome start, but with over 10,000 people estimated to be homeless in Toronto, much more remains to be done. With Saturday's new provincial order bringing the limit on gatherings down to groups of five people or fewer, **we believe that expediting the provision of not only temporary hotel rooms, but permanent residential units, for all those experiencing homelessness is the most prudent, as well as the most compassionate,**

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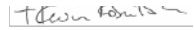
course of action in our current crisis.

We remain ready to do whatever we can to help meet the needs of vulnerable Torontonians, and we continue to welcome opportunities to work with and support City Council and staff in serving those in greatest need.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Andrew Toronto".

The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil,
Bishop of Toronto

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Kevin Toronto".

The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson
Area Bishop of York-Scarborough, Diocese of Toronto

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Andison".

The Rt. Rev. Jenny Andison
Area Bishop of York-Credit Valley, Diocese of Toronto

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