

Mayor John Tory and Councillor Josh Matlow
City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W.
City Hall, Second floor, West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory and Councillor Matlow,

Peace be with you.

We are writing to you as clergy, people of faith, and concerned citizens about the lack of permanent, stable, and supportive housing available to the most vulnerable members of our community. *We write particularly in support of the residents of the Broadway and Roehampton Shelter-Hotels.*

Housing and supporting marginalized communities during a pandemic is new terrain for all of us, and we understand it is difficult work. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Anglican churches have been on the frontlines, mobilizing to feed thousands of people a day, offering life-sustaining resources, organizing mobile COVID-19 testing, supporting homeless and recently evicted people, and helping others survive a difficult and precarious season in the life of our City. We witness firsthand the weight this pandemic has forced our most vulnerable citizens to bear.

We are gravely concerned with the lack of supportive, permanent, and autonomous housing options for homeless and displaced people. We have witnessed community members living in encampments for months without access to running water or bathrooms; many of them represent highly vulnerable populations (including the elderly, LGBT+ youth, pregnant youth, survivors of the Indian Residential School System and the 60's scoop, child apprehension survivors, and racialized people).

The relocation of these community members to shelter-hotels was the first time many of our community members received a bed to sleep in, *even after being on housing waitlists for many years.* We appreciate the City's response to the encampments in seeking to rapidly create housing options to support the homeless community. Unfortunately, in practice, the policies and conditions of the shelter-hotels have been described to us by many community members as being "more like jail than my own apartment", and accessible supports have been seriously lacking. Residents of the shelter-hotels have also reported ongoing hostility and harassment from residents of these neighborhoods. Therefore:

We call upon all levels of Toronto's City government to ensure the well-being, dignity, and safety of the residents of shelter-hotels. Closing the shelter-hotel program prematurely would further displace residents, putting them (and others) at greater risk of COVID-19.

We call upon City Councillors to confront prejudice against homeless and displaced people in our communities, by making known their support and concern for our most vulnerable people, and facilitating opportunities for education and understanding in their communities.

We urge community members to approach the needs of vulnerable and marginalized people from a position of compassion, and to recognize the dignity of all.

We call upon the City to end the over-policing and surveillance of shelter-hotel residents that has been reported over recent weeks and, instead, pursue community-based restorative justice approaches to conflict. An increase in private security, policing, and detention of community members by private security forces are making matters much worse for all involved.

We understand that local residents are encountering challenges with living alongside our community members who have been displaced. We are willing to offer our experience, expertise, and skills to support new and existing members of the community, along with the City government, to share what we have learned about co-creating community with encampments, shelters and subsidized housing, and with homeless and displaced peoples.

We call upon all levels of government

- to create safe, autonomous, and permanent housing for those who are homeless;
- to support and adequately resource the shelter-hotels, with resident-based feedback to ensure that policies and practices of these institutions do not further harm or traumatize vulnerable residents; and
- to immediately to cease all evictions and clearing of encampments

In the spirit of our faith, we seek to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to uphold the dignity of all people. We write in the spirit of mutual collaboration and creativity, as our City seeks new and innovative approaches to addressing the challenges outlined in this letter. We await your response and look forward to working together.

In solidarity,

Your neighbourhood Anglican clergy, and close supporters of individuals in the shelter-hotels

Archbishop Mark MacDonald
National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop

Reverend Daniel Cranley
Incumbent, The Church of the Transfiguration, Yonge/Eglinton

Reverend Andrew Federle
Rector, The Church of St. Clements, Yonge/Eglinton

Reverend Pamela Rayment
Associate Priest, The Church of St. Clements, Yonge/Eglinton

Reverend Liska Stefko
Associate Priest, The Church of St. Clements, Yonge/Eglinton

Patti Ryan
Deputy churchwarden Church of the Transfiguration, Yonge/Eglinton

Heather Hansen
Churchwarden of Church of the Transfiguration, Yonge/Eglinton

Kris Hamilton
Director of Music, Church of the Transfiguration, Yonge/Eglinton

Reverend Leigh Kern
Reconciliation Animator, Anglican Diocese of Toronto

Stephen Monk
Chair of Diocesan Housing Advocacy Committee

Reverend Andrea Budgey
**Chair of Diocesan Poverty Reduction Committee
Anglican Chaplain, University of Toronto**

Angie Hocking
Director of Outreach, Church of the Redeemer

Zachary Grant
Director, Church of the Holy Trinity

Reverend Alison Falby
Director, All Saints Sherbourne

Sandra Campbell
Social & Pastoral Care Worker, Toronto Urban Native Ministry

Reverend Maggie Helwig
**St. Stephens-In-The-Fields
Chair of SJAC (Social Justice and Advocacy Committee) Diocese of Toronto**

Reverend Deacon James Shire
Outreach Coordinator, St. Thomas's Church