

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

February 14, 2017

Dear Mayor Tory and City Council,

**Re: Toronto's Growing Housing and Homelessness Crisis**

We represent several Out of the Cold Shelters and the clergy and faith-based organizations that support our efforts.

This is the first time in the 30-year history of the Out of the Cold Program that we have come together to speak publicly about the plight of our guests. We are doing so because we have no choice: the shelter system is in crisis and this budget will topple it.

Last week the Beth Sholom/Beth Tzedec Out of the Cold Shelter had to close due to a flood. The guests were woken up and the city sent a bus to take them to Central Intake. Many knew the difficulty they would have finding a bed, and opted out of the shelter system. They preferred to sleep on the streets, in parks and ravines in last week's freezing rain. This tragedy illustrates how people have lost confidence in our shelter system due to its overcrowding. We believe something must be done.

The shelter system in Toronto is over capacity and can no longer handle the growing number of homeless in our City. Every week we are turning people away from our Out of the Colds who need a place to sleep. Sending people in need back out into the cold is a gut-wrenching experience for us, and has compelled us to speak out.

We are requesting:

- 1) The Mayor and City Council acknowledge the crisis in the shelter system and take immediate action to open more beds and shelters, beginning with the expansion of services and beds at the warming centre at St. Lawrence Community Centre.
- 2) There be no budget cuts to the shelter system and homelessness prevention including any removal of front-line workers or administrators from the system.
- 3) There be no budget cuts to the services provided to the most vulnerable people in our society that would force them to seek the support of shelters, including:
  - stopping the preparation of meals for the agencies that distribute the Meals on Wheels program. This will bring the program to a halt having a devastating impact on seniors and shut-ins.
  - the elimination of the cooling centres during the summer months.
- 4) That the City invest in long-term solutions for this acute problem. The budget does not address the issue of affordable housing at the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). The waiting list is now at 179,000, with half of the homeless people in the city on it. The backlog for repairs at TCHC is estimated between 2.6 and 3 billion dollars. In 2017 it is estimated that 425 units will be boarded up as they are no longer inhabitable. Between 2018 and 2023 the city will close 29,000 units.

We are deeply concerned about this budget and the way in which our City is handling the homelessness and housing crisis.

Sincerely,

Beth Sholom Beth Tzedec Out of the Cold

Holy Blossom Temple, Out of the Cold

St. Patrick's Church Out of the Cold

St. Matthew's Church Out of the Cold

St. Aidan's Church Out of the Cold

St. Margaret's Lakeshore Out of the Cold

Rafi Aaron, Co-Chair Beth Sholom/Beth Tzedec Out of the Cold

Father Santo Arrigo, St. Patrick's Church

Barbara Boraks, Executive Director, Christian Jewish Dialogue, Toronto, and Chair of the Basic Income Initiative

Rabbi Edward Elkin, First Neyerver Congregation

Rabbi Aaron Flanzraich, Beth Sholom Synagogue

Matthew Kellway, Co-ordinator St. Aidan's Church Out of the Cold

Rabbi Frydman-Kohl, Beth Tzedec Synagogue

Dr. Barbara Landau, Co-Chair the Canadian Association of Muslims and Jews

Rabbi Aaron Levy, Makom, Creative Downtown Judaism

The Rev. Dr. John Joseph Mastandrea, Metropolitan United Church, President of the Greater Toronto Area Interfaith Council, Chairperson of the Toronto South East Interchurch interfaith Committee, Interfaith Police Chaplain for 51 Division

Rabbi Michael Satz, Holy Blossom Temple

Rabbi Shalom Schachter, Vice President Ohalah – The Association of Rabbis and Cantors for Jewish Renewal