Mayor John Tory
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2
mayor\_tory@toronto.ca

Dear Mayor Tory:

**This is an urgent request that you step up efforts to provide immediate and safe indoor shelter to those living on the streets, under bridges, and in tents during this cold winter.**

I attend Church of the Redeemer at Avenue Road and Bloor, where a large outreach programme operates five days a week. Besides serving marginalized and homeless people at the church doorstep, staff and volunteers walk throughout the neighbourhood, delivering food and essential supplies to those living rough. They see what is happening on the ground.

Over the recent frigid period, it became again more and more apparent that the supply of indoor spaces is utterly inadequate to serve those in need. Central intake lines were overloaded and desperate people were asked to phone back in a couple of hours, an unrealistic demand for people who are unlikely to have access to their own phones. People with frostbite showed up at the church, unable to find a warm place to stay.

Immediate action must be taken; safe hotel rooms and more warming spaces must be made available, even as temporary measures. We are aware that 2 more warming centres opened on January 14, which is a start, but together these will only accommodate 89 additional people, a far cry from the thousands who are in need of warm indoor space immediately. Shelters are full, staffing and supports are weakened due to the pandemic, all of this is putting the marginalized community in greater jeopardy. But yet, resources continue to be used to clear encampments, while people continue to be offered zero options when they call the city number for help.

It is unconscionable that people in our city do not have warm roofs over their heads. This is literally a matter of life and death, as we have serious fears that members of our outreach community may freeze to death this winter. Again I implore you to take immediate urgent action to alleviate this deplorable situation. Safe indoor options must be made available now, and expansion of the COVID recovery program must happen immediately, to save lives. And to avoid this catastrophe again year after year, housing must be made available immediately for the poor and under-resourced.

 I look forward to hearing that you and the City are taking major steps to ensure safe warm spaces for everyone in Toronto, both immediately and in the long term.

Yours truly,

Cc: Councillor Mike Layton
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.
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