[date, i.e. May 3, 2023]
Re: Calling for City Council to declare a Homelessness and Housing Emergency!

Dear Deputy Mayor McKelvie and [your city councillor],

I am writing as a concerned resident about the urgent need for the City to respond to the homelessness and housing emergency. An unprecedented number of people have died while unhoused in the past two years. On May 10, City Council must accept the ECDC recommendation to declare a homelessness emergency, and make a formal statement declaring that the homelessness and housing crisis are an emergency necessitating immediate action. The City must respond with the urgency required!

[Incorporate reasons about why this is important to you personally]

Hundreds of Toronto residents have signed onto a petition making similar demands, and I urge you to respond to this emergency by ensuring that City Council:

1. Make a formal statement declaring that the homelessness and housing crisis are an emergency necessitating immediate action.
2. Advocate for the provincial and federal governments to build rent geared-to-income social housing in Toronto: 10,000 units immediately to address homelessness and 90,000 units to address the growing waitlist.
3. Advocate for the provincial government to enact a rent freeze, apply rent control to all rental units and enact vacancy rent control.
4. Advocate for the provincial and federal governments to increase social assistance rates to respond to the worsening homelessness and housing emergency, ongoing global pandemic, and increasingly unaffordable costs of living, as has been implemented in other emergency situations (i.e. CERB, which was $2000).
5. Implement a moratorium on encampment clearings and stop the harassment of residents and destruction of survival gear. Divest from policing and harassing marginalized communities and invest in providing access to safe shelter and housing options.
6. Stop shelter-hotel closures and open at least 2,700 additional non-congregate shelter spaces now. Residents must be provided with individualized housing plans. SSHA must stop displacing people to congregate shelters or outside.
7. Reinstate low-barrier, year-round 24-hour respite spaces with surge capacity for extreme weather.

Housing has become increasingly unaffordable, and over 80,000 households are on Toronto's social housing wait list. The City must put the wellbeing of people over profits and demand investment from the provincial and federal governments to build truly affordable housing. I refuse to witness more empty promises or back-room deals with other levels of government and developers that fail to ensure the wellbeing of tenants and unhoused people.

The violence and brutality I have seen across Toronto towards poor and unhoused people is appalling, where shelter-hotel residents are forcibly evicted and encampment residents are harassed, displaced and criminalized. Gentrification continues to displace Black, Indigenous, racialized, poor and disabled communities. Where are people supposed to go? The City must divest from policing marginalized communities and invest in safe housing and shelter options. Police and private security are not a solution to the housing emergency and pushing unhoused people further into the margins to make this emergency less visible is unacceptable.

People have the right to autonomy, privacy, and to safe, accessible and dignified shelter and housing. City Council has a responsibility to its constituents to meaningfully intervene in this emergency. As a Toronto resident, I will be paying attention to your vote and actions in responding.

Signed,
[your name]
[postal code]

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Scarborough-Rouge Park	Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie