

October 18, 2023

Members of the Planning and Development Committee  
City of Brampton  
*Sent electronically*

To the Members of the Planning and Development Committee,

***Re: Letter of Support for New Youth Shelter  
at 1358 Queen Street West in Brampton  
Item 5.2 – October 23, 2023 Meeting of the Planning & Development Committee***

I am writing as the CEO of Habitat for Humanity GTA. At Habitat for Humanity, our vision is a world where everyone has a safe, decent place to live. We focus our mission on providing opportunities for working families to realize this vision through a home that they own; however, we are advocates more broadly of housing solutions to meet needs across the whole spectrum of age and personal circumstances. As such, I am writing to voice my support for the permanent youth shelter that is proposed for 1358 Queen Street West.

The City of Brampton faces a growing housing crisis – and a growing homelessness crisis. Across the spectrum of lives who are negatively impacted by the lack of appropriate and affordable housing, perhaps no group is more vulnerable than homeless youth. As much as we would hope that all young people would grow up in homes that are secure, safe and accepting, this is not the case for every youth. As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure that youth who find themselves alone and unhoused, can access alternative sources of shelter where they are supported and embraced for who they are and where they are in life.

Beyond my role at Habitat for Humanity GTA, my support of solutions for under-housed youth is also personal. I am a former member of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto and was Chair of a provincial commission examining ways to ensure better outcomes for children and youth in Ontario's child welfare system. I am also the adoptive parent of a former Crown Ward, who became my son at aged 9, his sixth home in a period of 3 years. After a turbulent youth, he is now experiencing ever-growing confidence and success as a 28 year old young man, who, with my help, has just purchased a modest condo of his own.

While my son was able to have the stability of a safe and stable home throughout his adolescence, many of his friends did not. In thinking of the proposed youth shelter, I am reminded of one of my son's friends, who was without a permanent home from the age of 16 through 19. A turning point in his life happened just before he turned 18 when he walked through the door of a Toronto-based youth shelter. There, not only did he find a secure place to live and store his meagre personal belongings. He also had access to wrap-around supports as he transitioned towards adulthood. Today, he is married and is a successful paramedic, providing vital services to his community.

Both my son and his friend point to many factors behind their success as adults – but top on their list is the availability of a safe, secure, accepting place to call home – even if it wasn't permanent.

Brampton is a city of over 600,000. It is a wonderful, diverse caring city – but, to date, has not had a permanent shelter for youth for find themselves alone and homeless. I am thrilled to see that this proposal for a

permanent youth shelter at 1358 Queen Street West can change that. Such a development will bring this city another step closer to a vision we can all share: a Brampton where everyone has a safe, decent place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ene Underwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ene Underwood

CEO

[Ene.underwood@habitatgta.ca](mailto:Ene.underwood@habitatgta.ca)