

**Ontario
Human Rights
Commission**

Office of the Chief Commissioner

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**Commission
Ontarienne des
Droits de la Personne**

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March 14, 2025

Mayor Tom Mrakas
Town of Aurora
Council of the Town of Aurora
100 John West Way, Box 1000
Aurora, Ontario L4G 6J1

Dear Mayor Mrakas and Members of Council,

Re: Follow up to proposed emergency and transitional housing project at 14452 Yonge St.

I am writing for the Ontario Human Rights Commission (Commission or OHRC) about the Town of Aurora's recent [Mayoral Decision #2025-006](#). That decision rejected a motion to reconsider the Regional Municipality of York's 2021 emergency and transitional housing proposal at 14452 Yonge Street.

The Commission first wrote to the Aurora Town Council on February 22, 2023, raising concerns that delaying or denying approval of this project may create barriers to establishing desperately needed emergency and transitional housing and may also be discriminatory under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (*Code*).

Certain groups protected under the *Code* are disproportionately represented in the unhoused population. They are also more likely to require emergency and transitional housing and experience disproportionate harm when they do not have access to low-barrier, accessible housing options. This is particularly true for people receiving public assistance, Indigenous people, racialized people, and people living with disabilities including mental health disabilities, addictions, and complex trauma. A new [report](#) commissioned by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario provides more details on Ontario's homelessness crisis' human and financial costs.

A four-year delay in finding a suitable location while excluding viable options may result in a failure to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals protected under the *Code* and may be discriminatory. Under the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, a municipality's lack of sufficient low-barrier and accessible housing options for people

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experiencing homelessness can also limit its ability to prevent unhoused persons from sheltering in encampments on municipal property. This can be deemed as an administrative convenience which violates the *Charter* that can not be justified under it.

The Commission urges the Town of Aurora to consider all viable options, including the original proposed site at 14452 Yonge Street, and to expeditiously fulfil its obligation to provide transitional housing to meet the known needs of people experiencing homelessness in Aurora in accordance with sections 2.2.1, 6.1.3 and 8 of the Provincial Planning Statement 2024, issued under Ontario's *Planning Act*.

The Commission encourages the Town of Aurora to use a human rights-based approach to take advantage of funding available from the provincial and federal governments and find a solution to meet the emergency and transitional housing needs as soon as possible.

The OHRC welcomes the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide more information about its Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) Framework. In the meantime, the OHRC will continue to monitor the Town of Aurora's response and actions to address the urgent need for emergency and transitional housing in the community.

In keeping with the OHRC's commitment to public accountability and its duties in serving the people of Ontario, this letter and the responses received may be made public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia DeGuire".

Patricia DeGuire
Chief Commissioner

cc: York Region Chair and CEO
Housing York Inc.