Hi Doug,

Here is a response you can attribute to me:

“Encampments are unsafe, unhealthy and illegal. The City’s focus has been on moving people inside where they can get the proper care they need.

Under the Mayor’s leadership the City has moved to open thousands of supportive housing homes for residents to help provide safe, indoor shelter and needed healthcare and other supports to help provide people with a pathway out of homelessness.

The City has also increased the size of the shelter system - adding hundreds of more beds before the pandemic began - and expanding the system further during the pandemic to provide for physical distancing and combat COVID-19. More than half a billion dollars was spent on shelters and housing programs last year by the City of Toronto - this was entirely because the Mayor and City Council understood we need to do everything we can as a municipal government to provide safe shelter to people, and to provide supportive housing to those who need it.

This is of course on top of the work we are doing to create more affordable and supportive housing to provide long-term housing solutions for those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This past week alone the Mayor had three housing related announcements including a modular housing project that will provide a new home for 59 individuals in just a few short weeks. More works need to be done and the Mayor understands the importance of investing in supportive housing and more long-term solutions which is why he continues to advocate to the other levels of government for these investments. While there is much more to do, the progress made to date exceeds by far anything done in prior times. His main focus will be on working to get more housing built while making sure our parks are safe for everyone.”

Have a great rest of your weekend.

Best,

Lawvin
From: Doug Johnson Hatlem <djohnso@yahoo.com>
Date: Saturday, April 30, 2022 at 4:16 PM
To: Lawvin Hadisi <Lawvin.Hadisi@toronto.ca>
Cc: Jeffrey St Clair <sitka@comcast.net>, "A.J. Withers" <theajwithers@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Question for Mayor's office

Thank you, Lawvin. We had agreed to have the final draft to Jeffrey St. Clair (editor/publisher cc’ed here, along with my co-author Dr. A.J. Withers) by 5pm today. We are on track for that. Obviously he can fudge that at his discretion, and this is a reason I can imagine him doing so. I will reach out to him by other means as well in case he isn't checking email this later on a Saturday.

Below my signature is a copy of the email we sent you Thursday with more specific questions. The key one is updated here with more detail from what Leilani Farha actually says for the article:

Here is the text the mayor read and promised Don (or you, I suppose) would respond to: Hello Mayor Tory. Doug Johnson Hatlem here from Sanctuary, writing an article for Counterpunch. Hoping you will answer a question we have as to why, in spite of false insistences that all other options were exhausted first, you and senior City leadership rejected documented alternative plans from Councillor Josh Matlow and former UN Special Rapporteur on Housing Leilani Farha. So far your media team has ignored our questions on this and other counts.

The specific reference in the article is to the vote that Josh Matlow is referring to in this tweet where he called the Trinity Bellwoods response 'militarized' and a rejection of his alternative:
The specific quote from Leilani in the article that matters (there are others) is this:

"[The City] didn’t explore all of their options – I know this, because they never tried the approach that we offered to them in detail. We provided them with a detailed document of how we thought it could go. We were suggesting the City create a table of sorts where The Shift could assist in bringing together City Councilors, representatives of people living in homelessness and homeless people themselves, to help the City engage and to develop solutions together with those living in encampments. We offered all of that to them directly, and they did not pursue any of it."

Farha called the City’s Operational Plan, which we provided her a copy of, “shocking.” “The lack of humanity in that document struck me,” she said.

We are publishing the full operational plan, along with evidence that the Mayor asked in January for the encampments clearing plan.

Thank you in advance for your engagement on this.

We are of course available for a phone conversation on this.

Until Justice and Peace Embrace,

Doug Johnson Hatlem
Cell: (519) 573-3152
https://www.counterpunch.org/author/djhatlem0897/

Hello Mayor Tory, Don Peat, and whoever else it may concern:
We (Dr. A.J. Withers and I) are hoping to have answers to the following questions by EOD today when the first full draft of our article, which will be out Sunday morning in Counterpunch, is due.

We have documents that demonstrate:
   a. In both 2020 and 2021, evictions began after the Mayor’s Office intervened in the encampment file.
   b. The planning to evict encampments in 2021 began days after the Mayor’s Office called a meeting about “our plan for the spring” because “The Mayor has started asking”.
   c. The Mayor was aware of and briefed about the plan to evict the encampments months in advance.

Further, Leilani Farha of The Shift, and former UN Special Rapporteur on Housing told us in an interview that the city did not ‘exhaust all options’ prior to engaging in encampment evictions. She says: "They did not explore all their options and try them because they never tried the approach that we offered in detail. We provided them with a document of how we thought it could go. We even had City Councillors engaged and talking with representatives of people living in homelessness. We were even creating a table of sorts where we could have, in a neutral way, helped the City to engage directly… we offered all of that to them directly, and they did not pursue any of it."

We have spoken to two sources and have a third scheduled for an interview today on the question of who rejected the plan. One source is on the record suggesting that it was likely the Mayor’s office who rejected The Shift’s plan. One source is off the record suggesting another possibility. We expect our third source, deeply connected to senior City leadership, to offer some clarity on this, whether on or off the record.

Our questions are the following:

1. Who rejected Leilani Farha and The Shift's plan and why? How can it be said that you exhausted all options when a documented alternative was presented to senior leadership at the City? Was the Mayor’s office involved in the decision to clear encampments? Was he involved in the decision not to pursue other options - like those along the lines of what was proposed by the Shift?

1. There remains a significant gap between the number of people who are “actively homeless” (per Shelter Flow public data, currently at 9,933) in Toronto and shelter system capacity (8,038 as of April 26 per public data). The wrap-up code data, while kept secret, most likely indicates many people are turned away from the shelter system daily; there is extensive anecdotal evidence of
this. The gap between how many shelter beds there are and how many unhoused people there could grow in the next few weeks as some programs close and even more so as shelter hotels as a whole close. Where are the people who cannot access the shelter system allowed to sleep and keep their belongings in Toronto?

2. Has the Mayor’s Office intentionally withheld the February 15th briefing note (file is likely called BN_Encampment_Update_2021-01-14-CLEAN.doc) twice from an FOI request (2022-00414)? (This file has also been withheld from other requests.) If your office has not intentionally withheld it, and it has been an error of the APO or your office, can you please provide us with the file? If you are withholding it, why is this the case?

On Saturday, April 30, 2022, 03:28:49 PM EDT, Lawvin Hadisi <lawvin.hadisi@toronto.ca> wrote:

Hi Doug,

The Mayor had mentioned you had spoken to him and had a question for him. Can you send it to me and we can work to get you something? What is your deadline?

Let me know.

Lawvin