

SYSTEM IN CRISIS: An Action Plan for the Future of Toronto's Homeless Youth

**Youth Shelter Interagency Network (YSIN)
February 2007**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Toronto youth shelters are on the frontline of getting homeless youth off the street. These non-for-profit shelters provide the supports homeless youth need to better their lives and contribute to the community.

The Youth Shelter Interagency Network (YSIN) comprises eleven youth shelters (541 beds of Toronto's 579 beds)¹ that provide shelter, housing and crisis counseling; and rehabilitation and remediation programs for at-risk youth.

The last decade has seen a number of dramatic changes to the face and complexity of youth homelessness. Since the introduction of youth shelters in the 1980's, the scope and breadth of services provided by shelters have changed dramatically. The issues of today's homeless youth are increasingly complex and cross over into many of the silos of service provision (education, child welfare, youth justice, health, immigration). To keep up with these diverse needs, Toronto's youth shelters have evolved from the basic provision of safety, food, and shelter to a comprehensive and sophisticated service delivery mechanism that provides help to youth with mental and physical health issues, substance use issues, immigration issues, educational issues, and legal issues.

The stigma of homelessness is coupled with many misconceptions regarding what the trigger is that propels youth into the downward spiral of homelessness. They are *not* lazy, undisciplined, or criminal. Youth become homeless by fleeing from physical abuse, poverty, neglect and unskilled parenting. They can be quick to give in to hopelessness and can take a long time to trust anyone. For the vast majority, the youth shelter system becomes an unofficial surrogate parent to them. These are youth who have not had the opportunity to learn the life skills many adults take for granted. Homeless youth require a significantly higher level of care and investment to have a chance to be successful. To date, the agencies in YSIN are the only agencies that are providing this kind of care to homeless youth in Toronto.

However gaps in the system are significant, and issues exist at all three levels of government. The youth shelter system, while significantly under-resourced, struggles to provide the same services, as provincially-funded children's mental health and youth justice systems, and more.

For core funding, the present per diem funding levels are outdated, and do not even finance basic food and shelter provided by the youth shelter system. On average approximately 30-40 % of operating expenses are subsidized through fundraising efforts. Additionally, necessary building repairs and capital purchases are not addressed at all in the current system. Although inflation has been approximately 3% per annum, average per diem funding has increased less

¹ City of Toronto's Annual Per Diem Report (2007).

than 1% per year for a total of \$4.10 during the period of 1995-2007. This has impacted the youth shelter system by forcing it into financial instability.

To achieve a balanced budget for core shelter services (food and shelter only), YSIN shelters were required to fundraise approximately \$4.7 million dollars in 2005. In 2007, it is estimated that youth shelters will have to raise in excess of 5 million dollars for core shelter services.

YSIN recommendations:

- **YSIN recognizes the efforts of the City of Toronto to increase its 2007 per diem rate by 1%. However, it is requested that the current per diem rate of \$ 54.07 be increased to \$65.00, effective immediately. This would cover approximately 80% of the costs incurred in providing basic food and shelter services to homeless youth. This additional funding must be forthcoming in order for the youth shelter system to survive, meet its mission, and address the many social issues that impact our residents.**

Organizations operating youth shelters within Y.S.I.N. remain committed to fundraising revenue to subsidize the cost of providing this essential service. The current levels of fundraising required have now gone beyond the capacity of many of the youth shelters

- **YSIN recommends the cessation of the current requirement of shelters to cash flow the City. It is further requested that a system of operating advances be instituted which will see a lump sum fiscal advance issued at the beginning of each year, (when most shelters experience severe cash flow issues), which would then be balanced or “zeroed out” at the end of that fiscal year.**
- **As per several recommendations in the City of Toronto’s 2006 “*Street Needs*” Assessment and in its “*From Streets into Homes*” Strategy, YSIN would like to continue working with the City “*to develop improved services and strategies to address the needs identified*”. We further request the opportunity to work with the City to develop a long-term strategy and timeframe for Y.S.I.N. shelters to ultimately achieve fiscal parity with city - operated shelters. A coordinated strategy will also provide the City with the appropriate substantiation and rationale to seek the necessary funding from other levels of government.**
- **YSIN requests a provincial government action plan to recognize youth shelters for the important health and social services they offer. A network of care should be constructed that provides for health and social services resources within shelters, as well as augmented efforts to reduce barriers to access for youth that reside in the youth shelter system.**

The current social environment has put further strains on the shelter system. Shelters are housing significantly increased numbers of youth with existing and emerging mental health issues, substance use issues and co-occurring disorders. Moreover, an alternative resource for these youth is difficult to access due to long waiting lists.

There is no collaboration between systems. No transitional support is provided by the child welfare system for youth ages 18+ who are aging out of the child welfare system and are then appearing on the doorstep of the youth shelters.

Police, bail programs and other youth justice system agencies routinely refer youth straight from correctional facilities into the youth shelter system.

Hospitals customarily discharge youth with emerging mental health issues into the youth shelter system as if it were a treatment option – with no ongoing support.

Schools are reluctant to continue serving youth if they become homeless as they often move out of their catchments area to live in shelters.

This system disconnect causes youth to fall through the cracks -- finding themselves further marginalized -- and forced to seek refuge in youth shelters or, worse, on the streets.

Additional and improved funding, and more sustained recognition, is desperately needed in order for the youth shelter system to survive, meet its mission, and address the many social issues that impact our residents. Moreover, possible shelter closures or cutbacks which could result in health and safety risks are feared as a result of the ongoing prevalence of year-end deficit positions that many of the shelters are experiencing.

An investment at the youth level prevents them from graduating into longer term and much more costly systems as adults.

INTRODUCTION:

Youth Shelter Interagency Network (YSIN):

The Youth Shelter Interagency Network (YSIN) was formed in 1994 to represent the interests of Toronto's shelter operators for homeless youth.

A unified voice to raise awareness of the multi-faceted social and health programs run out of Toronto's youth shelters, YSIN also co-ordinates the overall planning and service delivery for Toronto youth shelter operators.

Moreover, the Network collaborates to resolve present and long-term issues, and to promote new methodologies designed to improve the service delivery of youth shelter operators.

YSIN members²:

- Covenant House – 122 beds;
- Eva's Initiatives – 114 beds;
- Horizons for Youth – 35 beds;
- Second Base (Scarborough) Youth Shelter- 56 beds;
- Touchstone Youth Center – 32 beds;
- Tumivut Youth Shelter – 52 beds;
- Turning Point Youth Shelter- 35 beds;
- YMCA House – 45 beds, and;
- Youth Without Shelter – 50 beds.

Mission Statement:

YSIN co-ordinates the wide-ranging, client-focused services of Toronto's youth shelters and advocates to ensure adequate funding is available to effectively serve the diverse needs of Toronto's homeless youth.

² City of Toronto's Annual Per Diem Report (2007).

YSIN 2007 Objectives:

YSIN is a collaborative effort that is dedicated to working with government to ensure there is a comprehensive range of shelter services available for the current and emerging needs of homeless youth.

Our primary objectives for 2007 are as follows:

1. To press for the elimination of current gaps in the funding structure for Toronto youth shelters and for an immediate increase in the current per diem rate to \$65.00;
2. To advocate for the eradication of current gaps existing in the infrastructure of Toronto youth shelters;
3. To partner with the City of Toronto to enhance its efforts to place the interests of youth shelter operators onto the agenda of the provincial government, and;
4. To promote awareness of the important role that youth shelters play in providing multi-faceted health and social services to at-risk homeless youth (particularly in the mental health and addiction rehabilitation sectors), and to enable shelters to more adequately work with other health and social service providers in providing front-line health services.

FACT SHEET:



FACT- Approximately 30% of the youth in shelters are experiencing mental health issues.

FACT- Approximately 20% of the youth in shelters are struggling with addictions.

FACT - The Child welfare system uses youth shelters as respite from their group homes.

FACT -The Justice system uses shelters as temporary housing, conditions of bail, and orders to reside.

FACT- Hospitals use the shelter system as a discharge plan for youth who experience mental health issues.³

- In 1979, there were only two youth shelters in the city, with a total of 95 beds.
- In 2006, there were 11 agencies operating a total of 14 sites contracted with the City of Toronto to provide overnight beds to youth who are homeless. The youth sector has a total capacity of 579 youth shelter beds currently funded by the City of Toronto.⁴
- In the past 27 years there has been an over 600% increase in youth shelter beds.
- YSIN members serve 541 of Toronto's 579 youth shelter beds (January 2007)⁵.

³ Excerpted from CBC News report, "No way home," originally broadcast March 10, 2004.

⁴ City of Toronto, January 2007.

⁵ City of Toronto's Annual Per Diem Report (2007).

- In Toronto, a good estimate suggests there are at least 10,000 different youth who are homeless at one point on any given year - and anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 on a given night. ⁶
- 64% of homeless youth (youth are under 25) are male. 91% of these men and 72% of these women are between the ages of 19 and 25. These youth generally leave home around the age of 15. ⁷
- 56% of homeless male youth have grade 11 or less, 31% have grade 12 and 12% have university or college or technical school. For homeless female youth, 60% have grade 11 or less, 33% have grade 12 and 6% have university, college or technical school. Of those who attended school and were assessed by counselors, 25.6% were diagnosed with anger management problems, 19.1% with ADD, 15.2% with hyperactivity and 4.5% with dyslexia. ⁸
- People become homeless for a wide variety of reasons – loss of job, marital breakdown, mental illness and alcohol and drug addiction. But when it comes to youth and children, the reasons tend to revolve around the family. ⁹

Several studies have indicated that 70% of youth have experienced some form of sexual, physical or emotional abuse. Many of the rest simply felt neglected. ¹⁰

⁶ Excerpted from CBC News report, “No way home,” originally broadcast March 10, 2004.

⁷ Excerpted from CBC News report, “No way home,” originally broadcast March 10, 2004.

⁸ Excerpted from CBC News report, “No way home,” originally broadcast March 10, 2004.

⁹ Excerpted from CBC News report, “No way home,” originally broadcast March 10, 2004.

¹⁰ Excerpted from CBC News report, “No way home,” originally broadcast March 10, 2004.

BACKGROUND:

Pre-1990:

- The 1977 murder of a shoeshine boy in downtown Toronto sparked growing concern about the increasing numbers of homeless and transient youth in Toronto.
- At the time, there were only a few youth services operating – primarily drop-ins.
- The Y.M.C.A. was the first mainstream agency to respond by opening shelters for young men.
- In 1982 Covenant House opened, and the following decade witnessed a rapid expansion of youth shelters in Toronto for the purpose of providing emergency shelter and food to homeless youth in Toronto.
- These early shelters were seen as havens to protect youth from the dangers of the street.
- Agencies understood that these youth required more than a safe place to stay – they needed assistance to develop life skills that were critical in helping them to stay off the street. They also needed to see that there were healthier alternatives.
- A municipal plan to have a youth shelter in each geographic area of the city was seen to be important in order to respond to homeless youth at a local level.

BACKGROUND

Post- 1990:

The last decade has seen a number of dramatic changes to the face and complexity of youth homelessness:

“Youth still comprise a large group of shelter users. In 2003, an estimated 6900 youth stayed in municipally-funded shelters accounting for 22 % of all shelter clients”.¹¹

By the mid-1990’s, there were 9 youth shelters in operation throughout Toronto. In 2006, there were 11 agencies with 14 sites operating youth shelters in Toronto.

The last decade has also seen drastic cuts to many key components of our social safety net for these vulnerable young people. For example, financial cutbacks experienced by health care resulted in the unfortunate reduction of services available to youth experiencing a psychiatric crisis or ongoing mental health issues. In addition, these short-sighted cuts contributed to an increase in homelessness for many marginalized youth and families.

“The limited development of new affordable rental housing in Toronto has resulted in an ongoing demand for emergency shelter.”¹²

Chronology of events resulting in fewer core infrastructure resources to address the needs of our homeless youth:

- In the mid 1990’s, the Conservative provincial government instituted a number of dramatic financial cuts which eroded the social service system;
- In 1995 welfare rates were cut by 20% and eligibility requirements became more stringent;
- In 1993 there was a decision to stop the further development of subsidized rental units;
- Changes in housing legislation removed rent controls and lessened eviction protections;
- Addiction services also experienced cutbacks including the closing of detox centers;
- The Youth Justice System and the focus on alternative measure sentencing resulted in reduced incarcerations and an even greater dependence on shelters;
- Reductions in funding to community centers resulted in closures of recreation programs – i.e. fewer supports to marginalized families and at risk youth;

¹¹ 2003 Toronto Report Card on Housing and Homelessness.

¹² 2003 Toronto Report Card on Housing and Homelessness.

- The Safe Schools Act and curriculum changes resulted in increased drop-out rates and continues to contribute to the homeless and at-risk youth population.

This erosion of social services has resulted in a greater dependence on emergency services, such as shelters, to meet a plethora of needs – mental health, addictions, education, life skills, employment training, and transitional housing.

As more youth continue to fall through the cracks, the youth shelter system has become the primary source of support and assistance for this group of disenfranchised youth.

BACKGROUND:

Multi-faceted services offered by Toronto youth shelters:

Youth who are homeless today encompass a diverse range of complex needs and are often struggling with multiple issues at one time. At the same time, the service system has lost resources as governments struggle to achieve fiscal balances. In response to these shrinking resources, social services have become more rigid around eligibility criteria and more specialized in their service.

These high-barrier service silos have made it difficult for marginalized homeless youth with multiple needs to access the supports that they need. As a result, the youth shelter system has become the primary access point providing a much-needed safety net for youth.

Youth shelters have been required to develop programs and expertise in response to the complexity of needs presented by the youth –services that go well beyond the basics of food, shelter and safety.

The following table provides a dramatic portrayal of the evolution in services from youth shelters to Youth Service Agencies (YSAs):

Pre-1990:	Post-1990:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food ▪ Shelter ▪ Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food, Shelter. and Safety ▪ Counselling ▪ Case management ▪ Assessment ▪ Referrals ▪ Advocacy ▪ Accompaniment ▪ Medical ▪ Health ▪ Sex education ▪ Concurrent disorders ▪ Mental health issues ▪ Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual Youth ▪ Aboriginal youth ▪ Youth with pets ▪ Youth couples ▪ Housing search and establishment ▪ Eviction prevention ▪ Supports for transition to Independent living ▪ Follow-up supports ▪ Transitional housing ▪ Educational continuation (Stay in School) ▪ Vocational supports ▪ Family Reconnect Program ▪ Harm reduction ▪ Pregnant youth – young mothers living on the street ▪ Police protocols ▪ Missing persons processes ▪ Social enterprise ▪ National Initiative Program ▪ Mentorship ▪ Life Skills Training

OUR 2007 OBJECTIVES DETAILED

1. Press for the elimination of current gaps in the funding structure for Toronto youth shelters and for the critical need of a proper funding model:

The current funding structure for youth shelters is woefully outdated and does not even cover the core expenses of food and shelter. In 2005, the majority of youth shelters ended their fiscal year in a deficit position.

Many youth shelters are currently operating on City (financial) “bail out” packages, and/or experiencing recurring fiscal deficits, which make them less attractive to potential donors. For instance, there are three YSIN shelters who are receiving bail out funding for a limited time from the City of Toronto – Touchstone Youth Center, Tumivut Youth Shelter, and Second Base (Scarborough) Youth Shelter. Our youth shelters are increasingly facing fiscal insolvency, and may be forced to impose budgetary cuts to some critical programs serving the needs of our youth clients.

Like many other sectors, youth shelters have experienced escalating operating costs - many of which are beyond our control:

- Since the 9/11 bombing of the World Trade Centre, insurance costs have spiraled;
- Utility costs have steadily increased;
- TTC and related transportation costs have increased;
- Food costs have increased;
- Many of the youth shelters have been unionized, which has resulted in higher salary and benefit costs, as well as increased administration expenses;
- The recent bed bug infestation across the city has resulted in substantial costs to some shelters;
- Responses to public health epidemics (ie. SARS), and;
- Essential, and often prescribed, building repairs and capital purchases are not in any way addressed in the current funding system.

Because the current social environment has put further strains on the system, shelters are housing significantly increasing numbers of youth with existing and emerging mental health issues, substance use issues, and co-occurring disorders. An alternative resource for many of these youth does not often exist. Where these resources may exist, they are difficult to access due to long waiting lists.

Current Funding Model:

The current funding system has no stable or “core funding” base, and is funded on a per diem funding model, which has failed to keep pace with the increasing operating costs of youth shelters, and which has not seen any significant increase since 1995.

The current per diem rate is \$54.07. This rate is in sharp contrast to the per diem cost of city-operated shelters that currently receive approximately \$85.00 per day. Although inflation has been approximately 3% per year, per diem funding has increased less than 1% per year for a total increase of \$4.10 to the per diem rate during the twelve-year period 1995 to 2007.

The revenue a shelter receives via this funding structure fluctuates on a daily basis depending on the occupancy rate on any given night, yet the operating costs do not experience a corresponding decrease as a result of lowered occupancy.

Not-for-Profit shelters must cash flow the City of Toronto, as per diem payments are made in the month or two after the expenses have been incurred and paid. Youth shelters are not in a position to cash flow the City of Toronto (or the provincial government). Unlike other social service agencies, our shelters are not permitted to deny access to homeless youth seeking shelter. From time-to-time – and to respond adequately to the diverse range of needs presented by the homeless youth accessing our shelters-- it is often necessary to increase staffing levels (and therefore operating costs). Moreover, this is consistent with our service mandate to ensure a basic level of safety and security in the shelter.

Furthermore, the implementation of increased accountability and shelter standards which have been imposed by the City pose significant costs to shelters. Some of the new requirements that drive up operating costs include:

- Youth shelters must now provide a prescribed set of training to all employees in the shelter;
- Food service requirements have increased;
- Particular items of furnishings and equipment must meet specific requirements, which necessitate purchase via specialized retailers;
- Archival storage dictation, and;
- Emergency response plan, the corresponding materials, and resources to implement them.

While there is general agreement that the increased standards are valuable additions to the system, there are significant costs associated with them, both in terms of materials training and resources, and the personnel required to develop, monitor and implement them. Unfortunately, the new requirements are not accompanied by a corresponding increase in revenue to cover these new demands.

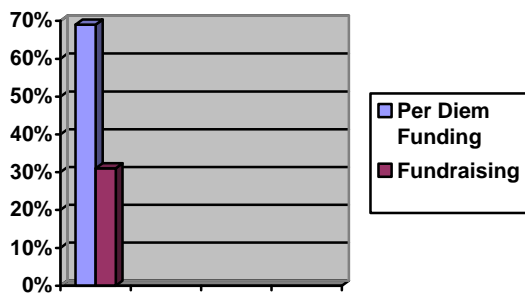
Newly-imposed space standards have resulted in the loss of beds to some youth shelters, which further negatively impacts their per diem funding potential.

Given the fiscal shortages experienced for the provision of basic services, funds required for necessary building repairs, health and safety issues and capital purchases are not covered at all in the current structure. Shelters must rely on Requests for Proposals, largely under the S.C.P.I. program to finance any of these necessary infrastructure repairs and improvements. This program is scheduled to end in March, 2007.

The number of youth shelters currently on financial “bail out” packages from the City further attests to the unsustainability of the present per diem funding rate.

Funding Structure and Fundraising:

The current per diem funding rate does not come close to covering the cost of basic food and shelter services:



To achieve a balanced budget for core shelter services (food and shelter only), YSIN shelters were required to fundraise approximately \$4.7 million dollars in 2005. In 2007 this figure is estimated to be in excess of \$5 million dollars.

On average, youth shelters are now forced to fundraise approximately 30 - 40% of their core operating budgets. This practice must continue despite the harsh reality that organizations operating at a deficit are universally hampered because they are not attractive to donors. In fact, increasingly donors are not willing to fund operational deficits.

In addition to fundraising to subsidize the provision of basic food and shelter, youth shelter organizations are now faced with the added burden of fundraising several million additional dollars a year for the provision of specialized programs and services aimed at moving youth out of the shelter system permanently, and into independent living situations in the community.

Such programs include:

Skills training and job placement;
Employment readiness;
Harm Reduction;
Educational Upgrading;
Anti Violence Programs;
Family Reconnect and reconciliation;
Mentorship;
Follow-up Services;
Social Enterprise;
Independent Living; and Housing and eviction supports.

The existence and successful operation of these types of programs and services can and is demonstrating a fiscal savings to the overall system. This is resulting in more youth leaving the shelter system, and establishing themselves independently in the community as contributing citizens (thereby paying taxes and assisting to support the overall social fabric needed to help others including less functional at-risk youth).

2. The eradication of current gaps existing in the infrastructure of Toronto youth shelters:

Our youth shelter system has become the last stop for youth falling through the cracks or aging out of the children's services stream (mainly provincial).

Unlike other sectors of the population (children, adults, seniors), there is no sole federal, provincial, or municipal infrastructure, ministry, or department charged with the responsibility for the youth sector of our population.

Their issues are complex and cross over into many of the service silos (education, child welfare, youth justice, health, immigration). The lack of coordination between these service system silos, as well as the inadequate supports provided to youth transitioning out of these systems, has left youth marginalized and vulnerable to the dangers of life on the streets.

Of particular concern is the large numbers of youth who are involved with violence and crime – in particular, those with mental health and/or addictions-- who are discharged from hospital or the Children’s Aid System with no plan in place. As there are no formal linkages with the Ministries responsible for these issues, the shelter sector has been unable to access resources to support extensive work with homeless youth who helplessly show up at our doors with these issues and others.

As youth shelters are playing a significant role in connecting with these youth and facilitating their transition to independence, it is essential that mechanisms for service collaboration and resource allocation be established with other service systems.

3. Partnering with the City of Toronto to enhance its efforts to place the interests of youth shelter operators onto the agenda of the provincial government.

This is consistent with the Toronto Youth Strategy, adopted by Toronto City Council in June 2005. This would require the identification of a designated “lead” from the City to advocate for, and on behalf of shelter operators, for necessary linkages and to more effectively formulate any required agreements with the provincial government Ministries. It is hoped that this partnership would lead to the equitable cost sharing and coordination of resources and improved access to dedicated program funding.

This funding is critically needed to sustain and enhance supportive services, such as mental health assessment and treatment, skills training, harm reduction, life skills coaching, mentorship, anger management, budgeting, therapeutic counseling, family reconciliation, employment readiness, education programs, street outreach and aftercare services. In addition to being critical tools that would open the doors to a brighter future for Toronto’s homeless youth, these programs would enable YSIN to integrate deeper into the broader social services and health care networks and more cost-effectively respond to the needs of homeless youth.

4. Promoting awareness of the important role that youth shelters play in providing multi-faceted health and social services to at-risk homeless youth (particularly in the mental health and addiction rehabilitation sectors), and enabling shelters to more adequately work with other health and social service providers in providing front-line health services:

Toronto youth shelters are now serving a population of youth who arrive at our doors with a multitude of needs above and beyond the issue of homelessness. Youth shelters that offer low-barrier, youth-friendly access are often a fail-safe option for these youth.

While once thought of as simply being “shelters” for youth offering the basic provision of safety, food and shelter, our shelters have been required to evolve into Youth Service Agencies. Our comprehensive system of Service Agencies offer a diverse and wide range of programs and specialized services that are designed to stabilize and support homeless youth to resolve issues that prevent them from being successful in the community.

Moreover, youth shelters are committed to stopping youth from “graduating” from the youth shelter system into the adult shelter system, and to developing responses that limit a young person’s reliance on the social service system; to assist them to gain the skills and resources necessary to live independently in the community.

While it is widely accepted that prevention and appropriate, timely intervention is a much more cost-effective basis of service provision than long- term (decades) reliance on the social service structure, Toronto youth shelters are still not recognized for the broad range of health and mental services they now provide. Nor are they funded appropriately to deliver the increasing services and specialized supports that youth require to develop the life skills they need to be successful.

In the absence of any definitive government infrastructure that has responsibility for this group of citizens, the youth shelter system has become the *defacto* delivery mechanism.

YSIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- YSIN recognizes the efforts of the City of Toronto to increase its 2007 per diem rate. However, it is requested that the current per diem rate of \$ 54.07 be increased to \$65.00 per diem, effective immediately. This would cover approximately 80% of the costs incurred in providing basic food and shelter services to homeless youth. Additional funding must be forthcoming in order for the youth shelter system to survive, meet its mission, and address the many social issues that impact our residents.

Organizations operating youth shelters within Y.S.I.N. remain committed to fundraising revenue to subsidize the cost of providing this essential service. The current levels of fundraising required have now gone beyond the capacity of many of the youth shelters. Possible shelter closures or cutbacks which could result in health and safety risks are feared as a result of the ongoing prevalence of year-end deficit positions that many of the shelters are experiencing.

- YSIN recommends the cessation of the current requirement of shelters to cash flow the City. It is further requested that a system of operating advances be instituted which will see a lump sum fiscal advance issued at the beginning of each year, (when most shelters experience severe cash flow issues), which would then be balanced or “zeroed out” at the end of that fiscal year.
- As per several recommendations in the City of Toronto’s 2006 “*Street Needs*” Assessment and in its “*From Streets into Homes*” Strategy, YSIN would like to continue working with the City “*to develop improved services and strategies to address the needs identified*”. We further request the opportunity to work with the City to develop a long-term strategy and timeframe for Y.S.I.N. shelters to ultimately achieve fiscal parity with city - operated shelters. A coordinated strategy will also provide the City with the appropriate substantiation and rationale to seek the necessary funding from other levels of government.
- YSIN requests a provincial government action plan to recognize youth shelters for the important health and social services they offer. A network of care should be constructed that provides for health and social services resources within shelters, as well as augmented efforts to reduce barriers to access for youth that reside in the youth shelter system.

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