
TO: Audit Committee

DATE: June 6, 2022



RE: AU12.1 Part 1 of the Audit of Emergency Shelters: A Focus on Case Management (Ward All)

Dear Committee Members,

I am the Executive Director of the Toronto Shelter Network, the TSN. I am here to express support for many of the recommendations made by the Auditor General in the Case Management Audit.

The TSN represents 34 organizations that collectively deliver Toronto's 24 hour emergency homelessness services, including shelters, respite centres, 24-hour drop-ins and the COVID-19 shelter hotels.

The recommendations presented by the Auditor General align with our belief that it is necessary for us to fundamentally change our current approaches to homelessness and commit radically to being client centered and housing focused.

The TSN values the incredible efforts undertaken by the shelter sector and by SSHA to keep Toronto's most vulnerable residents safe during the pandemic. Over the past year, we have conducted research and convened planning tables to identify how best to recover and transition from the pandemic. We support SSHA's Homelessness Solutions Service Plan, however, we also know, when we look at other comparable jurisdictions that our shelter investments can be used differently and towards much greater impact. Well before and certainly since the onset of the pandemic the City has been spending hundreds of millions of dollars on emergency shelter programs that to the best of all our intentions are not moving people out of homelessness. Unless we do things differently the number of people entering and staying in the emergency shelter system will continue to increase.

We support the Auditor General's recommendations for enhanced case management tools, more consistent monitoring and accountability of case management practices and clear outcomes based measures for guiding system performance. In particular, we agree that SMIS is not adequate. A modern information management system that provides useful and accessible client data and information, which helps staff with case planning and follow-up and which enables cross sector information sharing and care continuity is desperately needed.

The same financial investments used today on our emergency shelter system can be reallocated to reduce homelessness. As noted by the Auditor General, providing emergency shelter is significantly more expensive than providing supportive housing, subsidized housing, rental subsidies or housing allowances. The TSN is calling on the City to be bold and focused in its allocation of our shelter resources. A good number of shelter residents can get back on their feet with solid case management support, rental subsidies or housing allowances and post-housing follow up.

And for those people who are chronic users of shelters, including people who live with mental health challenges, those using substances or those who are aging in the shelter sector, we can reinvent ourselves and deliver tailored long term shelter - that offers dignified housing with health, mental health, harm reduction and treatment supports.

We recognize that housing is complex and will continue to advocate to other orders of government to do their share. However, the City is making decisions everyday about how it is allocating resources. While we wait for the province to step in with supportive housing dollars we can make the decision to revision how we do things and help improve people's livelihoods now.

Thank you for hearing us today.

