



Community Services

CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
NEIGHBOURHOOD LINK
ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY HOUSE

RE: EX9.2 - Implementation Update: Auditor General Recommendations on 9-1-1 Operations and Responses to Calls for Service by the Toronto Police Service

October 27, 2023

Dear Mayor Chow and members of the Executive Committee,

I am writing on behalf of TNG Community Services, a social agency serving more than 40,000 low-income people and families in 30 locations across Toronto. With more than 1,000 staff and the support of over 600 volunteers, our free programs and services address the most pressing issues in our community: poverty, homelessness, mental health, unemployment, social isolation, substance abuse, conflict resolution, violence, youth alienation, and the settlement of newcomers.

We have worked with many participants in our Corner drop-in and other programs who have experienced trauma in police interactions. This reality leads us to fully endorse a non-police community response. TNGCS enthusiastically supports the city-wide implementation of the Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS). There is clear evidence that shows people experiencing a mental health crisis can be diverted to a mental health practitioner and away from police. Policing is not the answer when responding to people who are low risk but face social and health issues like homelessness and mental health, recognizing that these are not crimes. A community-based service provides a more in depth and skilled response, connecting those in crisis to services, completing follow-ups and supporting them to connect with ongoing case management.

Furthermore, ongoing concerns about deeply rooted systemic racism and unjustified use of force in policing has clearly demonstrated racial bias, particularly towards Black and Indigenous citizens. When people are racialized and have mental health disabilities the outcomes can be very problematic. Racialized community members who have prior traumatic interactions with police can be very impacted by their presence at the time of crisis. These interactions exacerbate vulnerability and increase risk.

On October 31st there is an opportunity for you as the Executive Committee to make the impactful decision for the City-wide expansion of the TCCS. Given the City's positive reporting on the community pilots, there is now strong evidence about the need for expansion. We also urge you to fund this expansion now, not in 2025. Presently, almost half of the city is still not served by pilots. This not only poses increased risk to citizens of Toronto; it is also a missed opportunity to connect those at highest risk in our city to services that could change their trajectory and prevent them from having repeat crises. Please vote in favour of the expansion of TCCS City-wide in the coming year to respond to crises in a timely, appropriate and effective manner.

Sincerely,

Serena Nudel

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