



January 21, 2025

Councillor Shelley Carroll

Chair of the Budget Committee

Re: Toronto Shelter and Support Services Budget for 2025

Deputation to the Budget Committee

The Toronto Shelter Network (TSN), represents more than 32 organizations that collectively deliver Toronto's 24-hour homelessness services, including traditional shelters, respite centres, 24-hour drop-ins, transitional housing and the COVID-19 shelter hotels. TSN supports our partners collective capacity to provide critical service in Toronto through knowledge sharing, information exchanges, collaborative planning, research and advocacy, and we champion housing with dignity for people experiencing homelessness. We also celebrate the hard work of the agencies and staff that do the work serving the homeless community particularly this week for the Emergency Shelter and Homelessness Service Workers Appreciation Week.

I am here to express TSN's support for the 2025 Toronto Shelter and Support Services budget with a few recommendations for the Committee to consider.

Of the 11,000 people residing in the shelter system, 4,500 are refugees and 1,300 are in bridging programs. Many are now considered chronically homeless as the lack of affordable housing and the allocations from the COHB program do not meet the growing need for housing in our expensive city.

The refugee serving community is disappointed by the response and lack of accountability to the recommendations in the December Ombudsman Report. They felt betrayed in seeing the report buried. The report is counter to Access T.O's own recommendations which states that migrants with uncertain status have the right to access a range of municipal services.

**TSN would like to see a resolution made by Council to protect refugee claimants by making it illegal to deny access to shelter spaces based on immigration status and we propose a recommendation to allocate appropriate resources to combat**

**Anti-Black Racism at TS3, Central Intake and the City's bureaucracy and that this should be an elemental value and guiding principle in its operations. We request that TS3 consult with the refugee serving sector on how best to serve refugee claimants and to address and unearth inherent and unintended biases.**

Capital and operating expenditures for the Housing Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy will enable the shelter system to transform delivery systems from emergency focused responses to smaller, longer term, permanent and purpose-built community-based spaces that can transition to permanent housing. **New HSCIS funded shelters must provide harm reduction, primary health care and mental health services and be funded appropriately – not with base salaries, inadequate administrative allocations or a heavy reliance on fundraising by the non-profit providers.**

TSN welcomes the allocation of \$7 million in the budget for wage and funding parity, however we fear that the **purchase of service sector will not be able to compete without more upfront capital and social investments**, and the sector will continue to lose staff to the City.

In 2023 TSN released a report funded by the City to implement a Service Model for Addressing Grief and Loss for the whole sector. TS3, in this budget, has requested \$568K for a 24/7 team to provide crisis interventions, debriefing and follow-up supports, for Directly Operated Shelters only. This will increase the inequities between the City run shelters and the purchase of service shelters who support 79% of the beds/shelter users in the sector. **We request that this budget item be doubled to \$1.2 million to support all shelter and homelessness services staff.**

TSN supports the data strategy initiative which will target and provide forecasting for areas of need including Indigenous people, black people, youth and women. We will continue to work with TS3 to acquire more and better data, and access to SMIS to support POS providers in setting their own priorities for service to the diverse populations that they serve.

With the increase in the number of encampments we believe the City must move faster on creative solutions for transitional housing such as allocating on a temporary basis City owned land designated for future development for cabin communities.

TSN is committed to making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring but we continue to see twice as many people entering the shelter system as leaving it and 78% of those in the system are now considered chronically homeless, making shelters de facto housing. We support the TS3 budget and its new and enhanced programs, however, we know the only long-term solution to this crisis is to build more affordable

and supportive housing. To that end, we support new targets proposed by Mayor Chow in the Housing TO – 10 Year Action Plan.

Until we can achieve and exceed these targets, we need a stable, long term, supportive, low barrier, housing-focused, shelter and allied service system that supports people experiencing homelessness and transitions them into housing.

We will continue to work with the sector and TS3 to advocate for increased federal and provincial funding, to enhance services, and to improve health and housing outcomes for people without homes.

Thank you for your continued support and consideration.

Leslie Gash

Executive Director, Toronto Shelter Network