

To Members of City Council,

Toronto has an untenable homeless crisis. We know this. We also know it is not unique to Canada, and that communities across Canada — and especially in Ontario — are contending with more and more people who are forced to live their lives almost entirely outdoors.

As members of Council, you know I have been critical of the city's response when necessary. I have also been critical of other levels of government for failing to take the homelessness crisis seriously — including by advocating to them for the resources Toronto needs to provide adequate support to refugees, as well as for the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit.

But I will also give credit where credit is due — including last June when the city directed its two HT0 to Go water trailers to Sankofa Square and Moss Park during a heat crisis and overdose emergency. This response came as a direct result of the advocacy of myself and my colleagues. It helped to save lives, as extreme heat can exacerbate the health impacts of using drugs — which can be deadly.

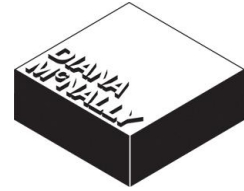
As we move toward summer of 2025, I support the procurement of two additional water trailers. Again, and as per the motion's suggestion, these can and should be applied to emergency circumstances to help save lives and keep people safe.

However, Council knows the scale and reach of homelessness across Toronto. While water trailers can be deployed strategically, the reality is that the need for fresh, potable water far exceeds the resources available through the HT0 to Go program, even with additional trailers.

Moreover, heat emergencies are but one permutation of when trailers or other resources might become needed. Council also knows the devastation created by floods last year, which also made people living outdoors more susceptible to disease and infection as their bodies and belongings became drenched with untreated wastewater. Potable running water is a necessity year-round for good health — especially considering climate change — and it continues to be inaccessible to many homeless Torontonians.

Any equitable strategy for climate resiliency must prioritize all-year potable running water. With just 182 public washrooms across Toronto, the majority of which are offline during the winter months, access is clearly extremely limited.

To help mitigate this, I personally raised \$10,000 for Project FoodChain to distribute 236,160 bottles of water to 72 agencies across the GTA working with homeless people. In the absence of accessible running water, bottled water is an emergency health care need. People need water to drink, but also for wound care and hygiene. Sadly, reusable bottles are not a viable option without fresh running water and the ability to clean them. The inequities of



being forced to live outdoors in an increasingly volatile climate go together with the environmental inequity of needing to rely on single-use plastic resources.

What I am asking is for Council to explore short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to ensure access to potable water for vulnerable people, year-round.

In the short-term, this might include uploading or funding our community-led efforts to distribute bottled water to local agencies and outreach organizations. I am available to discuss the program model, including costing and distribution.

In the short- to medium-term, this might also include establishing emergency weather centres. Currently, the city operates winter warming centres, as well as clean air centres during smog alerts, but flexible centres to function during any emergency weather conditions — including heat alerts and extreme flooding — would make city services more equitable and climate resilient. Toronto's current Heat Relief Strategy is unfortunately highly inadequate as-is, having eliminated emergency cooling centres in 2021 in favour of privatized resources (malls) and inappropriate and inaccessible spaces (splash pads and libraries and community centres, which are not 24/7).

In the long-term, this might include expanding year-round public washroom access, including by winterizing current washrooms, and prioritizing facilities in the planning of any new public spaces.

Again, I want to emphasize that the city being proactive about expanding the HT0 to Go program is laudable — I commend you for this.

But we can also think bigger and ensure year-round access to water to everyone in our city who needs it, regardless of housing status.

Many thanks,

**Diana Chan McNally**  
Community Worker and Maytree Fellow