

Shelter Pressures and Access Initiatives - Updates

Date: November 28, 2025

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) continues to manage the largest municipal shelter system in Canada amidst unprecedented demand, driven by the housing affordability crisis, limited income supports, and the continued arrival of refugee claimants seeking shelter supports. In response to operational pressures City Council directed TSSS to enhance transparency, equity, and accountability in shelter access through [CC28.2 - Identifying and Addressing Pressures in the Refugee and Emergency Shelter System](#).

This report responds to City Council's direction to provide a status update on the implementation of all recommendations in the fourth quarter of 2025. As of November 2025, 15 of the 24 directives under CC28.2 have been completed, 4 are in progress and will be completed upon adoption of this report, and 5 remain in progress or represent ongoing work.

This report also provides updates on key initiatives related to the refugee-serving and base shelter systems, including:

- Access to Shelter Framework – A structured, transparent process guiding future decisions on shelter eligibility, aligned with the Toronto Housing Charter, human rights obligations, and equity principles. The framework was reviewed by the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit (CABR), the Toronto Newcomer Office (TNO), and the City's Human Rights Office, and included formal engagement with the Housing Rights Advisory Committee's (HRAC) Supporting Unhoused Rights Holders Working Group.
- Operational measures aimed at advancing establishment of a dedicated refugee service system and addressing financial pressures.
- Emergency Family Shelter Support (EFSS) Program – Short-term accommodation support for families during periods of high shelter demand to ensure children are not left unsheltered.

- Additional Council-directed Actions through [CC28.2](#) and [EC22.12](#) – Progress on data and outcome tracking, training, capacity building, refugee sector engagement, equity initiatives, human rights-based learning sessions, the renewal of AccessTO public education campaign for undocumented residents, and partnerships with hospitals and health care providers.
- Research and Data Sharing Partnerships – Establishing agreements with individuals, external organizations and research institutions to conduct evaluation and research to inform and develop best practices to support people experiencing homelessness.

The report outlines next steps to implement the Framework, refine EFSS program operations, reduce pressures in the refugee service system, strengthen data-informed decision-making, continue equity-focused training, and continue advancing other recommendations under CC28.2. Together, these measures aim to improve fairness, transparency, and equitable access to shelter and housing for all Torontonians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, recommends that:

1. City Council approve the Access to Shelter Framework in Attachment 2 to this report as the process to review and assess proposed changes to shelter eligibility, and authorize the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, to make future adjustments to the framework, in consultation with the Human Rights Office, Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, Toronto Newcomer Office, and other relevant divisions and offices.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services and the General Manager, Toronto Employment and Social Services, to continue implementing and administering the Emergency Family Shelter Support program as set out in this Report and Attachment 3, provided that the funding for the program is available within the Operating Budget for Toronto Shelter and Support Services.
3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services and the General Manager, Toronto Employment and Social Services, to develop and implement modifications to the Emergency Family Shelter Support program as they deem necessary to:
 - a. ensure the Emergency Family Shelter Support program remains responsive and scalable to fluctuations in demand for family shelter space that exceeds available family shelter capacity; and
 - b. maintain program integrity.
4. City Council authorize the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services to enter into research agreements with individuals and external organizations for research

and/or data sharing purposes, including requests for data in the custody and control of the City, and any research involving City staff or Toronto Shelter and Support Services service users, provided that:

- a. the research is for the purposes of advancing system planning and transformation and informing improvements to existing policies, programs and practices; and
- b. all research agreements comply with City policies and requirements of the Municipal Freedom and Information and Protection of Privacy Act, on such terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

5. City Council authorize the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services to enter into agreements with individuals and external organizations to use Toronto Shelter and Support Services space to conduct research for the purposes listed in recommendation 4 on such terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

6. City Council authorize the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services to provide letters of divisional support to individuals and external organizations for grant funding proposals for research projects that support the purposes listed in recommendation 4.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no immediate financial impacts associated with the recommendations in the report. There may be future financial implications to the following:

Emergency Family Shelter Support (EFSS) Program

This program helps meet the needs of families who require temporary shelter. Each year, the program's budget is adjusted based on expected demand and available space in the family shelter system. If more families need shelter than anticipated and/or available, there may be financial pressure to the City.

The EFSS program is intended as a temporary support measure, with the overarching goal of ensuring sufficient space and resources are available for families with children and pregnant women when required.

Funding for the EFSS program is included in the 2025 Operating Budget for Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS). The budgeted amount for EFSS program is anticipated to reduce over time as new family shelter beds become available through the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS). As these new resources become available, the need for the EFSS program is expected to decrease and eventually be phased out.

Ongoing monitoring of the program will be required to ensure resources are allocated effectively to areas of needs.

Dedicated Refugee Service System

As refugee claimants continue to arrive and with the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) with funding available until 2027, TSSS is implementing operational measures to build a dedicated refugee system that is financially sustainable. These measures include setting targets for length of stay, strengthening case management and outreach, and ensuring timely refugee applications. The purpose of these measures is to reduce the number of refugee claimants needing shelter and help those in the system transition more quickly.

Discussions with the federal government on the current IHAP agreement are in final stages. TSSS remains committed to supporting refugee clients and ensuring they have access to essential services.

Research Agreements

Funding for research is included the 2025 Operating Budget for TSSS and any future research will be accommodated within each year's existing budget.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

EQUITY IMPACT

Toronto's homelessness service system serves a range of equity-deserving groups, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, seniors, low-income households, people with disabilities, Indigenous and Black communities, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, youth, and newcomers.

Efforts to address system pressures, barriers to access, and equity challenges within the shelter system aim to strengthen capacity, enhance decision-making, and promote fairness, transparency, and accountability in service delivery. Understanding how these challenges intersect with anti-Black racism and human rights practices is critical to achieving equitable outcomes for Indigenous, Black, and other equity-deserving communities experiencing homelessness.

Ensuring that both sheltered and unsheltered individuals, including refugee claimants, families with children, pregnant women, and vulnerable individuals transitioning from healthcare settings, have access to safe, high-quality emergency shelter and permanent housing opportunities is not only a key determinant of health but also supports social and economic well-being.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 9, 2025, the Economic and Community Development Committee directed the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, in consultation with Humber River Health and other relevant health care providers, to report back in the fourth quarter of 2025 on options for partnerships with local hospitals and health care providers ([2025.EC22.12](#)).

At its meeting on March 26 and 27, 2025, City Council directed General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, to implement a series of directions to address pressures within the shelter system, improve access and equity for all shelter users, and enhance the transparency and accountability of shelter service delivery. City Council also directed the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services to report back with a status update on the implementation of all these directions to City Council in the fourth quarter of 2025. ([2025.CC28.2](#)).

At its meeting on December 17, 2024, City Council received for information an Ombudsman's Office report on the investigation into the City's decision to stop allowing refugee claimants into base shelter system beds. The report included 14 recommendations ([2024.CC24.1](#)).

At its meeting on December 17, 2024, City Council directed the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services and the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat to accelerate expansion of specialized refugee shelter and housing options to complement and enhance the City's emergency shelter system. ([2024.EC17.4](#)).

At its meeting on November 8 and 9, 2023, City Council adopted the Shelter Infrastructure Plan and the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy, as the guiding Strategy for capital infrastructure spending decisions from 2024-2033 across the City of Toronto's shelter system. This plan includes the gradual transition from temporary shelter hotel sites into housing or shelter space within the base shelter system. ([2023.EC7.7](#)).

COMMENTS

1. Shelter System Pressures and Context

The City of Toronto operates the largest municipal shelter system in Canada, offering the greatest number of beds per capita nationwide. The system includes emergency and transitional shelters, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins, serving adults, youth, families, and other vulnerable groups such as Indigenous people, 2SLGBTQ+ residents, seniors, youth, couples, and newcomers.

Although demand for shelter services has decreased over the last year, it continues to exceed available capacity. In October 2024, 12,240 people were accommodated with 9,604 in the shelter system and 2,637 people outside of the system. By October 2025,

8,971 were accommodated with 8,698 in the shelter system and 273 outside of the system.

Unmet demand has also decreased but remains significant, particularly in the singles sector. At the end of October 2025, 102 families were on the family placement list, down from 796 at the end of October 2024. The average number of unmatched callers (reflecting unmet demand in the singles sector) fell from 225 a day in October 2024 to 155 a day in October 2025, indicating improvement but continued pressure on system capacity.

As highlighted in the [2024 Street Needs Assessment](#) report, this sustained pressure reflects the ongoing housing and affordability crises, inadequate income supports that have not kept pace with the rising cost of living, unmet health needs, and refugee claimants requiring emergency accommodation. TSSS is in the process of activating its winter plan for the 2025-26 season which will add hundreds of beds to the shelter system, offer warming centres during colder temperatures and improve access over the coldest months of the year.

Newly arriving refugee claimants have become the fastest growing client group in the City's shelter system. As of early November 2025, there are approximately 3,400 refugee claimants in the shelter system, representing 40% of all shelter clients. In 2023, the City of Toronto made a series of operational decisions to manage capacity due to the lack of space in the City's non-refugee-claimant shelter system. These decisions, and the City's communications about them, prompted a review by the Toronto Ombudsman, who released the report "[Enabling Access: Investigation into the City of Toronto's Decision to Restrict Shelter Access for Refugee Claimants](#)" in December 2024, including 14 recommendations to improve fairness, transparency, and accountability in access to shelter services.

2. Council and Ombudsman Directions

In response to the Ombudsman's December 2024 investigation, City Council adopted item [CC28.2](#), "Identifying and Addressing Pressures in the Refugee and Emergency Shelter System", which directed staff to implement a number of the Ombudsman's recommendations and report back on progress. As part of this direction, Council requested the development of a framework to guide future decisions related to shelter access and eligibility, ensuring consistent, transparent, and equitable approaches across the system.

This report provides an update on:

- The development of an Access to Shelter Framework, which responds directly to Council's directions;
- Operational measures to advance a dedicated refugee service system to address pressures as we prepare for the end of the IHAP funding stream;

- The Emergency Family Shelter Support (EFSS) Program, as a related initiative focused on improving access to shelter for families with children; and
- The status of additional Council-directed actions related to transparency, training, engagement, and health and research partnerships.

Together, these initiatives aim to strengthen the City's approach to managing access to shelter in a context of unprecedented demand.

3. Access to Shelter Framework

In response to Council direction and recommendations of the Ombudsman, TSSS has created the Access to Shelter Framework (the Framework). The Framework provides a structured, transparent, and equitable process for assessing and implementing potential changes to shelter eligibility across the shelter system. It is intended to guide decision-making in alignment with the [Toronto Housing Charter](#), the City's human rights obligations, and TSSS' strategic objectives for equitable access to services and funding criteria.

The Framework defines the key requirements for any change to shelter eligibility:

- TSSS' obligations and authority: Clarifies legislative and policy parameters, including responsibilities under the Housing Services Act, 2011, City of Toronto Act, 2006, and Toronto Shelter Standards;
- Alignment with the Toronto Housing Charter: Ensures decisions uphold non-discrimination, accessibility, equity, and the progressive realization of the right to housing;
- Roles and responsibilities: Outlines accountabilities of TSSS and other City divisions in assessing, approving, and implementing eligibility changes;
- Processes: Provides a step-by-step approach for research, analysis, consultation, approval, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of eligibility changes.

The Framework was developed through a rigorous, multi-phase process that included research, stakeholder engagement and jurisdictional analysis. Engagement involved key internal partners such as Central Intake and Streets to Homes, as well as city divisions and offices with mandates related to equity and human rights. This involved review by the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit, the Toronto Newcomer Office (TNO), and the City's Human Rights Office. Formal engagement was also undertaken with Housing Rights Advisory Committee's Supporting Unhoused Rights Holders Working Group, whose feedback helped shape the Framework's equity and rights-based approach. A jurisdictional scan of 14 regions (11 Canadian municipalities and three U.S.) further informed the work. The review identified varied approaches to shelter access, including residency requirements, financial screening, and centralized access systems.

The Framework identifies circumstances under which shelter eligibility changes may be considered:

- Directions from Committee or Council;
- Access issues identified by staff, stakeholders and sector partners;
- Emerging operational or policy needs;
- Alignment with sector-wide approaches;
- Compliance with legislative, bylaw, or government directives;
- Budget or resource planning and capacity considerations;
- Proactive risk management or addressing systemic issues.

To ensure equity, transparency and consistency, the Framework includes:

- A structured checklist for analyzing proposed changes, considering alignment with the Toronto Housing Charter, operational feasibility, and potential impacts on equity, access, and inclusion.
- Five guiding principles: Right to Housing; Non-Discrimination and Inclusion; Equity and Accessibility; Participation and Accountability; and Housing as a Human Right.
- Guidance for documenting and approving changes through formal policy templates and sign-off by the General Manager, TSSS.
- Processes for consultation with the City's Human Rights Office, Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, Toronto Newcomer Office, Ombudsman, relevant City divisions, and external stakeholders, including Indigenous service delivery partners.

Together, these elements ensure that any future decisions regarding shelter access are evidence-informed, equitable, and transparent, and that TSSS remains accountable to both Council direction and the City's human rights commitments.

All decisions on shelter eligibility changes will continue to be approved by the General Manager, TSSS, consistent with legislated authority under the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Housing Services Act, 2011. TSSS acknowledges and will comply with City Council's direction that the General Manager will follow the Toronto Shelter Standards' interim amendment process by issuing a Directive when making changes to eligibility criteria for Toronto's shelter system, and this process be applied for all eligibility changes under the Framework. The General Manager will consult with the City Manager, Legal Services, the Human Rights Office, CABR, and TNO as required.

The Framework itself does not create new programs and does not require additional funding to implement. Any future eligibility changes arising from use of the Framework will include an assessment of operational and financial impacts as part of the standard analysis and approval process.

4. Transition Towards a Sustainable Refugee Service System

In 2023 and 2024 in response to significant increase in shelter demand from newly arriving refugee claimants, many arriving from African countries, the City of Toronto increased its refugee shelter capacity more than tenfold. At the height of the surge in August 2024, the City was providing shelter to 6,490 claimants nightly, making up approximately 60% of the total shelter population.

The arrivals subsided in late 2024 allowing the City to turn its attention from emergency refugee response towards system stabilization. Almost 2,000 refugee claimants have been supported to leave the emergency shelter system since the start of 2025. This has been achieved through continued shelter diversion, including transfers of 323 clients to federal hotels and referrals of approximately 400 clients to the Peel Reception Center, enhanced shelter outreach and expansion of new shelter models - refugee houses and small specialized refugee shelters.

As of late November 2025, there are approximately 3,400 refugee claimants in the shelter system, representing 40% of all shelter clients. While this is the lowest proportion since 2022, Toronto continues to accommodate significantly more refugee claimants than any other municipality in Canada. With appropriate resources, operational adjustments, as well as systemic measures implemented beyond Toronto, refugee shelter occupancy could be further reduced to sustainable, pre-COVID levels.

Since 2017, the main source of funding for the City's refugee response has been the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP). To date, the City received a total federal funding of \$652.7M, and an additional \$17M for the regional response program implemented in 2019 and 2020. IHAP has been instrumental in helping offset financial impacts on the municipal budget. In early 2025, the City submitted a grant application to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for the period of January 2025 to March 2027, when the grant stream is scheduled to end. The City is currently in the final stages of negotiating the IHAP grant agreement and is optimistic about the outcome. To ensure stability and integrity of the shelter system in Toronto, TSSS has identified operational measures that will facilitate the transition from emergency refugee response implemented in 2023 and 2024, towards the establishment of a dedicated refugee service system by the end of 2026.

In line with Council direction from December 2024 ([EC.17.4](#)) and March 2025 ([CC.28.2](#)), TSSS established the Refugee Service System Roundtable in May 2025, to support the planning and implementation of the refugee service system. The Roundtable includes key refugee-serving partners with expertise in refugee response operations, as well as key City divisions (Employment and Social Services, Social Development and Housing Secretariat). The Roundtable continues to meet on a quarterly basis and is supportive of operational measures identified below. At its September meeting, the Roundtable also discussed strategies for meaningful

engagement with refugee claimants in planning and delivering refugee shelter services. They include focus groups with participants at various stages of the claim process and establishing an advisory board consisting of refugee claimants who were previously staying in the shelter system. The proposed approaches will be implemented in the fall of 2026.

Operational Measures

The following outlines operational measures identified as necessary in order to reduce the number of refugee claimants in the shelter system, transition towards a dedicated and sustainable refugee service system by the end of 2026, and address the financial pressures related to IHAP funding available until 2027.

Length of Stay Targets

As per Toronto Shelter Standards ([section 8.5.5](#)), the City's shelter system does not have a prescribed limit to the length of time a client may stay in an emergency shelter. However, a benchmark of 90 days is used as a general guideline for initiating a reassessment of a client's service plan. In February 2022, the average length of stay of refugee claimants in the shelter system was just under six months. By August 2025, this time span had increased to over 18 months. This is a result of many factors including the size of the shelter population, capacity to support client exits through case management, limited affordable housing options in Toronto, client system dependency, and unintended consequences of housing allowances, among others.

Moving forward, a length of stay of up to six months, with a reasonable extension in exceptional circumstances, will be set as an expectation and case management goal. The exceptional circumstances include large single parent families, clients experiencing mental health issues or significant trauma, clients with disabilities, etc.

With appropriate supports, it is expected that most refugee clients will be able to meet a six-month timeline for discharge. For clients who become homeless after leaving the system, support will be provided for them to return to their housing, for example, through eviction prevention supports.

The expectation of the six-month length of stay is supported by refugee service providers and will facilitate collaboration and alignment with other municipalities in Ontario that receive IHAP funding.

This operational measure will be achieved through the following actions:

- providing case reviews and enhanced supports to refugee claimants in the system longer than six months
- informing all new refugee clients at intake about the length of stay expectations
- providing enhanced case management with IRCC's Toolkit as a guideline
- establishing interjurisdictional operational collaboration and coordination

Timely Refugee Applications

Applying for refugee status and becoming a refugee claimant formally has significant implications, including securing a work permit, being eligible to receive Ontario Works, Interim Federal Healthcare, and access Peel Reception Centre. Despite that, it is not uncommon that refugee clients delay submitting their applications for refugee protection in Canada.

Refugee clients will be encouraged to file a claim within two months of entering the shelter system. This approach has been identified as optimal and is supported by refugee service providers as an approach that will lead to more efficient case management and client success.

This operational measure will be supported by providing information to clients about the implications and referrals for access to additional resources.

Enhanced Case Management

In the spring of this year, IRCC issued a Case Management Toolkit specific to refugee claimants who are placed in temporary accommodations. While Toronto Shelter Standards already outline case management expectations, IRCC's Toolkit is more detailed and provides resources to ensure that claimants are well-informed, understand their role, and are guided through the asylum process while in shelter. The Toolkit also provides comprehensive guidance to case managers, supporting their ability to manage cases effectively and efficiently, while ensuring that refugee claimants are supported in a timely manner maximizing their ability to leave the shelter system faster.

TSSS will adjust the Toolkit to Toronto's context which will become a required approach to case management in the City's refugee service system. These enhanced case management services will be offered in a culturally and linguistically responsive way, ensuring that all claimants are receiving case management and have access to critical resources and tools necessary for life stabilization and smooth transition to housing. This is in addition to supports already provided across the shelter system and refugee shelter programs, such as settlement and immigration supports, either onsite or through referrals to community partners.

Enhanced Outreach and Information Sessions

Enhanced outreach to Toronto shelters with large numbers of refugee claimants began in the late spring of this year. Information sessions are delivered separately to shelter staff and to refugee clients. Shelter staff receive key information necessary for them to support refugee clients to move to housing independence, such as information about settlement referral options, Peel Reception Centre, importance of case planning and management and importance of data accuracy. Sessions for refugee clients include information such as the purpose of emergency shelter, client responsibility to actively

engage in case management and development of a housing plan, referral options and building understanding around feasibility and access to benefits, including the very low probability of receiving a housing benefit like the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB).

These information sessions have already resulted in increased refugee claimant exits from the system. Resources from other funded programs will be redirected to increase outreach, which will become part of regular operations of the refugee shelter system.

Access to Base Shelter System

As of November 25, 2025, there are 1,112 refugee claimants in the base shelter system. While it is expected that the above operational measures will result in many clients exiting the system or moving to refugee specific programs, it is possible that some may remain. It is also possible that some refugee claimants may choose to access the base shelter system in the future, and this will continue to be an available option. Once in the base shelter system, referrals to refugee shelters may be facilitated to provide access to more specialized services.

Assessment of Refugee System Operational Measures Using the Access to Shelter Framework

While no changes to shelter eligibility are being proposed for the refugee service system, TSSS has applied the Access to Shelter Framework to assess the operational measures identified to meet requirements under the IHAP funding agreement, reduce the number of refugees in the shelter system, and support the transition to a dedicated and sustainable refugee service system. These measures, such as targeted lengths of stay, strengthened case management, and enhanced coordination, are not eligibility changes and do not restrict access to shelter. However, several elements align with the Framework's principles of equity, transparency, and client-centered service. To ensure consistency with the Framework's expectations, TSSS followed the same approach used for eligibility reviews, including structured analysis, engagement with partners such as the Toronto Newcomer Office and the Refugee Service System Roundtable, and identification of mitigation strategies to preserve access. This process confirmed that operational measures support improved flow, housing-focused case management, and better outcomes for refugee claimant clients while maintaining full access to the shelter system. TSSS remains committed to monitoring operational changes and consulting with key stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure measures are applied appropriately and improved outcomes are achieved.

5. Emergency Family Shelter Support Program

The Emergency Family Shelter Support (EFSS) Program provides families experiencing homelessness with temporary financial support to secure short-term accommodations when no shelter space is available for the family due to existing demand and capacity issues. The EFSS program ensures that families with children are not left unsheltered

and is only provided as a program of last resort, when demand for family shelter spaces exceeds system capacity. TSSS prioritizes meeting a family's needs through referrals to City administered shelter programs when space is available and will refer families to shelter as soon as capacity permits. By providing a structured, short-term alternative to unsheltered homelessness, the EFSS program complements shelter system operations, ensuring families receive timely support during periods of high demand.

The EFSS program is a City-funded program, jointly administered by TSSS' Central Intake (CI) and Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS). CI is responsible for initial assessment of the family's shelter needs; weekly monitoring of shelter needs; support for families to secure documents and apply for housing and benefit programs; and management of the Family Placement List, through which all families waiting for shelter are placed. CI also conducts program integrity activities, such as in-person meetings with clients for documentation review and eligibility assessments and investigations. TESS is responsible for issuing and tracking funds used for temporary accommodations, including verifying eligibility for Ontario Works (OW), conducting weekly reviews of client receipts submitted through the MyBenefits portal, and weekly verification of family's accommodations. Both divisions collaborate to ensure effective oversight and management to the program.

TESS and CI have processes for the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information. TESS and CI collect and share client information to effectively collaborate on client care and program oversight. CI collects personal information regarding shelter needs and the location where families are staying while waiting for shelter using the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS). TESS collects personal information regarding OW eligibility and fund disbursements using Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) and uses the MyBenefits portal to obtain and review documentation to verify appropriate use of funds. TESS and TSSS share client information for supported families to monitor and report on the EFSS program. This ensures both divisions work effectively together in supporting the families, maintaining comprehensive records of the services provided to families, and verifying documentation and compliance with program requirements to ensure appropriate use of funds.

The EFSS program funds are exclusively for short-term lodging, such as hotels, motels, or temporary rentals while families wait for a referral to shelter. To be eligible for the EFSS program, families must include one or more children under 18 or a person in their third trimester of pregnancy and be active recipients of OW. All adults in the family are required to agree to the program requirements to be eligible to receive EFSS. When a family's needs can be met within the shelter system, families are required to accept referrals to shelter from TSSS, as they will stop receiving EFSS once they are offered a referral into the shelter system. Families are also required to participate in weekly activities to verify their ongoing need for shelter and provide documentation to demonstrate the appropriate use of EFSS funds. An overview of the EFSS program operational details and requirements can be found in Attachment 3.

CI and TESS have implemented a coordinated process to verify program eligibility and compliance. While on EFSS, families are required to regularly report on their ongoing shelter needs, confirm information about their short-term accommodation arrangements, and submit their receipts to demonstrate compliance. CI staff are embedded within TESS offices to support this process and monitor program compliance. These measures help to maintain the integrity of the program and ensure that support is provided to families who are most in need.

6. Other Status Updates on CC28.2

The following section provides status updates on the implementation of Council directions, organized by thematic area. Attachment 1- Summary of City's Actions in Response to Council Directions from CC28.2, contains a full list of City Council directions along with the status of each, and actions undertaken by staff to implement these directions. As of November 2025, 15 of the 24 directives under CC28.2 have been completed, 4 are in progress and will be completed upon adoption of this report, and 5 remain in progress or represent ongoing work.

Tracking Access to Shelter and Housing Outcomes (Recommendation 13)

The emergency shelter system plays a critical role in the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing by providing immediate protection and dignity for individuals experiencing homelessness, while serving as a key access point to permanent housing and supports. Although shelter is not a substitute for adequate housing, it forms part of a continuum of responses aimed at ensuring no one is left without safe accommodation.

In line with Council direction to track progress toward the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing for all sheltered and unsheltered clients, TSSS uses Central Intake data to assess overall demand for shelter services and monitor trends in access, occupancy, and outcomes for all shelter users, including refugee claimants. These data track both new and repeat requests for shelter, identify capacity pressures across the system, and help evaluate equitable access to services. Shelter occupancy data complement Central Intake metrics by highlighting whether different service populations experience equitable access. Families with children are tracked separately through a family placement list maintained by Central Intake.

Transitions from shelter to permanent housing are monitored to assess equitable housing outcomes and system performance. Key indicators include the proportion of shelter stays that result in permanent housing. TSSS also uses the SMIS database to track Central Intake calls, shelter occupancy, inflow and outflow of shelter users, and shelter users exiting the system for permanent housing and evaluates program outcomes across various housing placement initiatives. SMIS data and outcome tracking are shared with TSSS and Housing Secretariat Senior Management and to sector partners monthly. TSSS shares shelter system flow data publicly through the [Shelter System Flow dashboard](#), as well as occupancy and Central Intake calls data through its website and Open Data reporting.

Together, these data support the Division's role in ensuring equitable access to shelter and in tracking housing outcomes for all shelter users, including refugee claimants.

Equity and Data Governance

TSSS remains committed to using data as a tool to advance equity. This includes adherence to the principles of the Data for Equity Strategy, Indigenous Data Sovereignty, and the Black Community Data Governance Framework. TSSS engaged the Data for Equity unit to support governance challenges and continues to collaborate on establishing guiding principles for data use.

In line with Council direction, TSSS will explore approaches to track progress on how shelters are used as a pathway toward more adequate housing outcomes for both sheltered and unsheltered clients, through outreach, referrals and encampment responses. This work may involve collaboration with the Data for Equity Unit and other internal or external experts.

Training and Capacity Building (Recommendation 17)

TSSS continues to strengthen the capacity of staff and service providers to meet the specific needs of diverse client groups, including 2SLGBTQ+ refugees. TSSS ensures that all policies, procedures, and directives are inclusive and responsive to these needs. This includes implementing mandatory training for City staff and contracted service providers, tracking completion and implementation metrics, and embedding equity-focused practices across service delivery. Capacity building initiatives extend beyond frontline staff, encompassing leadership and management teams to ensure consistent understanding and application of inclusive service standards across the system.

Anti-Black Racism Analysis Tool (Recommendation 5)

On February 28, 2025, the TSSS Senior Management Team received an in-person training on the ABR Analysis Tool, delivered by Aina-Nia Learning. A second session for policy staff was held on June 17, 2025. Training materials remain available for all staff through the Division's intranet (SPOT) and are incorporated into onboarding programs.

Encampment Response Learning Sessions (Recommendation 9)

In collaboration with the Maytree Foundation, TSSS developed human rights-based learning sessions for City staff across multiple divisions involved in the City's encampment response, including the Encampment Steering Committee, Encampment Working Group and City operational staff involved in encampment response to ensure City-wide consistency in knowledge and application of rights-based principles when responding to encampments. The training curriculum focuses on homelessness, the City's commitment to progressively realize housing as a human right, and equitable service delivery, equipping staff to approach encampment situations with a rights-based perspective. In June 2025, 17 members of the City's leadership team in the

Encampment Steering Committee participated in a two-part learning series. In October 2025, TSSS completed the second phase by training members of the Encampment Working Group including managers and supervisors overseeing the City's encampment response.

Access T.O. Public Education Campaign (Recommendation 16)

Under the *City's Access to City Services for Undocumented Torontonians* policy, also called AccessTO, all Torontonians, regardless of immigration status, have the right to access City services without fear. The Toronto Newcomer Office is renewing public education materials that will include updated posters, postcards, and a service provider handbook, to increase awareness of the scope of the policy and supports available. The primary audience for these materials is undocumented Torontonians and the agencies that serve them; however, these materials will be beneficial to all newcomers in Toronto.

The Toronto Newcomer Office held an event to mark Undocumented Residents Day on August 20 and leveraged this event to solicit input from community partners on public education materials. Feedback from community agencies highlighted the need for multilingual materials, clear guidance on service access, promotion of low-cost programs, and information on complaint mechanisms. Dissemination is planned for early 2026, with ongoing collaboration with community partners to ensure outreach reaches undocumented residents effectively. The rollout will be paired with continued AccessTO training for City staff. Future updates will be provided through the Social Development Division, who leads implementation of the AccessTO policy through the Toronto Newcomer Office.

For additional details on all recommendations, please see Attachment 1- Summary of City's Actions in Response to Council Directions from CC28.2.

7. Partnerships with Hospitals and Health Care Providers

As part of the City's Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness, the City is committed to continuously improving how shelters enable access to primary care, mental health services, harm reduction, case management, and other specialized supports for individuals experiencing homelessness. Strengthening coordination between the homelessness and health systems is essential to ensuring equitable and timely access to shelter and health supports for people with complex needs.

TSSS collaborates closely with Ontario Health - Toronto Region, Inner City Health Associates (ICHA), and a network of community-based health providers and hospitals to deliver integrated health services across the homelessness services system. This includes primary care, mental health, harm reduction, and case management supports provided directly within shelters, 24-hour respites, drop-ins, and through outreach in outdoor settings, including encampments.

Several programs exemplify these partnerships, including Dunn House, which integrates onsite medical and mental health supports and is a partnership between the City of Toronto, University Health Network, Fred Victor, and United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT); the Infirmary Program, which provides temporary medically supported shelter for individuals recovering from illness or hospital discharge; and the Annex Program, which supports clients requiring enhanced health and stabilization supports in partnership with hospital and health teams. These collaborations ensure coordinated care planning and "warm transfers" across health and housing settings, improving outcomes and reducing readmissions to hospitals and shelters.

In response to Council direction ([2025.EC22.12](#)), TSSS has been requested to report back in Q4 2025 on options for partnerships with local hospitals and health care providers, including Humber River Hospital, to explore opportunities for shelter spaces that support safe care plans and transitions for individuals leaving health care facilities who require both health and housing supports.

To support this work, the City has engaged Humber River Health alongside with Ontario Health Teams to explore partnership opportunities and coordinate care plans for vulnerable individuals transitioning from health care settings to local shelters. This work will involve consultation with existing healthcare partners, hospital networks, relevant City divisions, and community partners to ensure alignment with client needs, shelter operations, equity-focused service delivery and alignment with broader health systems collaboration.

The City looks forward to continued collaboration with the health sector including Humber River Health, ICHA, and other health partners to strengthen pathways to shelter, health services, and supportive housing. In 2026, TSSS is piloting a program with ICHA and other community partners to deliver intensive case management and wrap around supports, including health and mental health services, to shelter clients with complex, unmet needs and fractured connections to care, with the goal of increasing service continuity towards stabilization and housing outcomes.

8. Data Sharing and Continuous Improvements

There is a need to continuously improve programs and supports as part of the opening of new purpose-built sites. As identified in TSSS's Council approved Homelessness Solutions Service Plan, TSSS supports research, evaluation and use of data that advances system planning and transformation and informs improvements to existing policies, programs and practices that address homelessness.

TSSS has a long history of working in partnership with community agencies, research institutions and other orders of government to generate research and evidence to inform services related to homelessness. Collaboration between Toronto's research community, service providers, policy makers and people with lived experience of homelessness is essential for providing effective services and supports to vulnerable populations and ensuring successful outcomes for our clients. Recent research

partnerships include the [Shelter Safety Study](#) led by CAMH that helped provide a roadmap to prioritizing and improving shelter safety for staff and service users.

TSSS supports research that is:

- Relevant and aligned with its vision, mission, values and strategic priorities and has value to the division, TSSS's client population and community for the purpose of improving service delivery;
- Feasible relative to operational and other divisional priorities;
- Compliant with divisional, corporate and legislative information management and privacy protection requirements.
- Has received Independent Research Ethics Board (REB) approval and aligned with core research principles outlined in the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans - TCPS 2 \(2022\)](#), including the principles of respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice.

This report seeks Council authority to enter into research agreements with individuals and external organizations for research and/or data sharing purposes, including requests for data in the custody and control of the City, and any external research conducted on City property or involving City staff or people experiencing homelessness. It also seeks authority to provide letters of divisional support to academics for grant funding proposals for research projects.

Building new and strengthening existing relationships and partnerships with community, research and government agencies will increase evidence-informed decisions in our services and programs. This will enhance the Division's understanding of the needs of people experiencing homelessness, help to measure our outcomes and impacts, and help to continuously improve our shelter programs as part of the opening of new purpose-built sites and enhancing existing shelter sites.

9. Next Steps

Building on the Access to Shelter Framework and operational learning from EFSS, and new partnership initiatives with health care providers, TSSS will continue to strengthen system capacity and improve decision-making processes.

Key next steps in 2025-2026 include:

- Implementing the Access to Shelter Framework, in consultation with the City's Human Rights Office, Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, Toronto Newcomer Office, and relevant City divisions.
- Immediately implementing operational measures to align with IHAP funding agreement and facilitate the transition from emergency refugee response towards the establishment of a dedicated, sustainable refugee service system.
- Reviewing and updating EFSS program eligibility criteria and operational processes, in alignment with the Access to Shelter Framework and in

collaboration with Social Development, the Indigenous Affairs Office, the Toronto Shelter Network Family Sector Table, and the HRAC Unhoused Rights Holders Working Group.

- Ongoing monitoring and analysis of shelter demand, access, and housing outcome data to ensure services are delivered equitably.
- Continuing training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance equity-focused service delivery across all shelter and outreach programs.
- Advancing partnership development with Humber River Health and other local hospitals to improve transitions from health care facilities to shelter, strengthen care coordination, and enhance access to appropriate health and housing supports.
- Partnering with individuals, community agencies and research institutions to conduct data collection, data sharing and research that support system planning and transformation and inform improvements to policies, programs, and practices that address homelessness.

Through these initiatives, TSSS will continue to address demand in the shelter system, improve fairness and transparency, and advance equitable access to shelter services and housing for all Torontonians.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1- Summary of City's Actions in Response to Council Directions from CC28.2

Attachment 2- Access to Shelter Framework

Attachment 3- Emergency Family Shelter Support Program Operational Details and Requirements