

Shelter Pressures and Access Initiatives – Updates

Economic and Community Development Committee
Toronto Shelter and Support Services

December 2, 2025



Council Direction & Context

- In March 2025, City Council adopted [CC28.2](#) directing Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) to implement measures to address system pressures, improve access and equity, and strengthen transparency and accountability in shelter services. Council also requested a status update on all directions in Q4 2025.
- In July 9, 2025, Economic and Community Development Committee (ECDC) adopted [EC22.12](#), directing TSSS, working with Humber River Health and other health-care partners, to report back in Q4 2025 on partnership options with local hospitals and health-care providers.

Report Highlights

- TSSS has **advanced key operational and policy changes** that address system pressures and improve service and access.
- This report provides an update on current system pressures, the operational changes underway and the **improvements made to strengthen and guide future decisions** related to system access.

Shelter System Pressures

- Homelessness has been increasing across Ontario and Canada.
- Association of Municipalities of Ontario released “[Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario’s Homelessness Crisis](#)” report in January 2025 indicating more than 80,000 people experiencing homelessness in Ontario.
- Toronto shelters continue to be at full capacity with current demand exceeding availability each night.



Toronto operates Canada's largest municipal shelter system



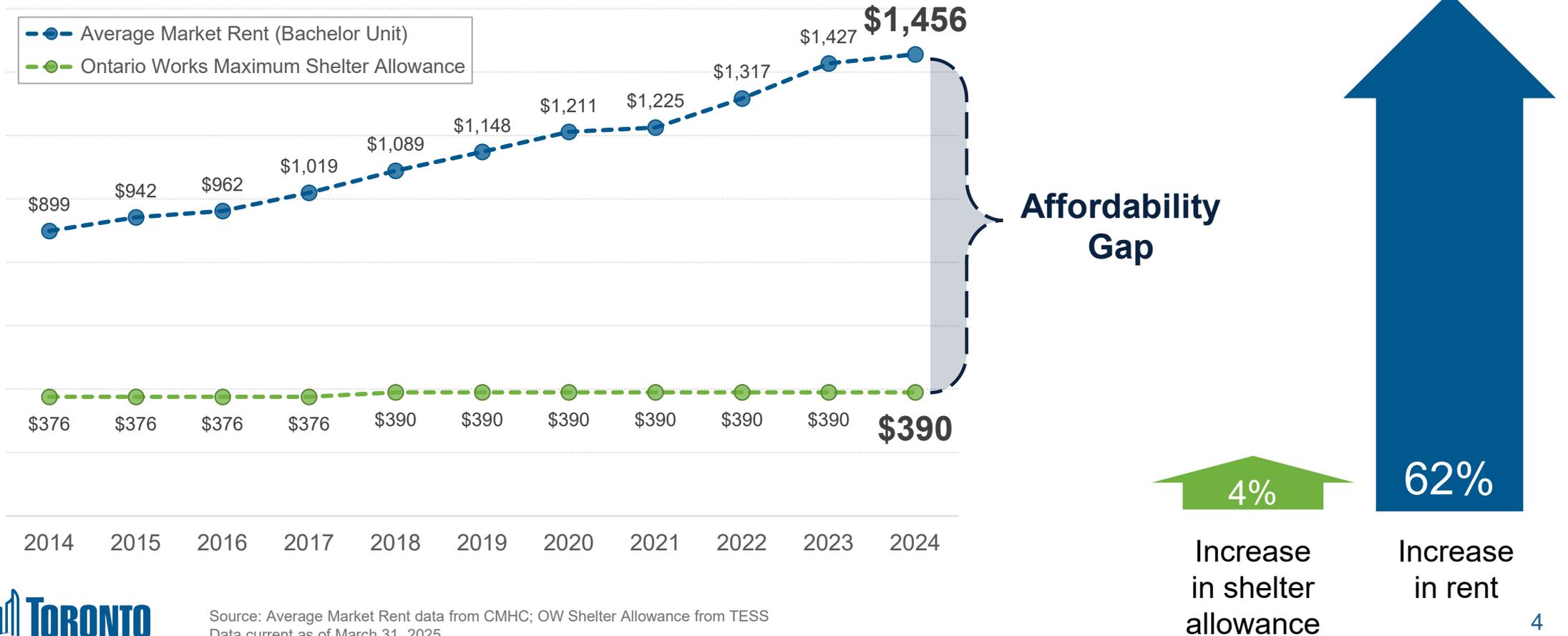
Demand exceeds capacity



Pressures driven by housing and income gaps

The growing affordability gap is a key driver of the homelessness crisis

Ontario Works Maximum Shelter Allowance & Average Market Rent
Bachelor Unit, Toronto, 2014-2024

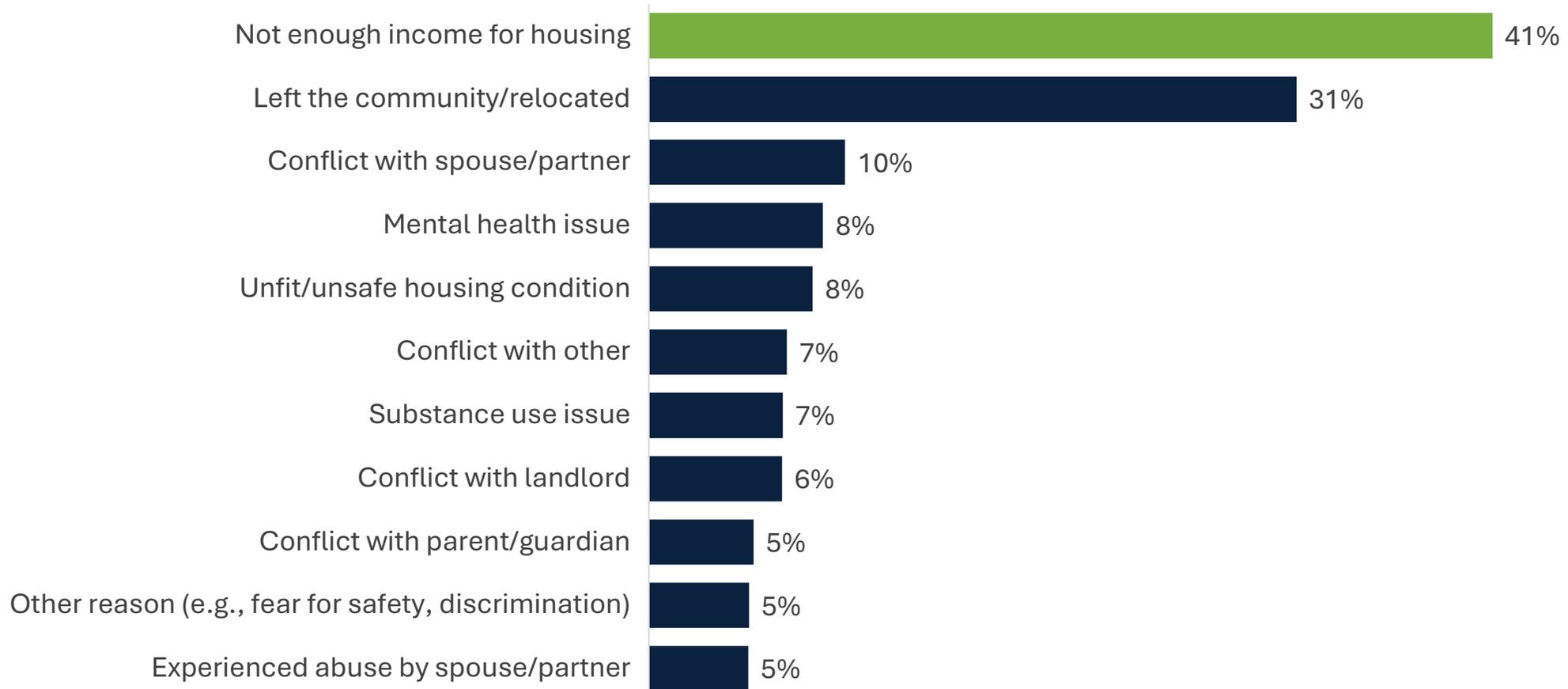


Pressures on tenants that impact homelessness

- 40% of renter households struggle with the affordability of housing spending over 30% of their income on housing. For low-income households reliant on social assistance, there are virtually no affordable housing options in the current rental market at today's shelter allowance rates of OW and ODSP
- Renters face significantly higher rents if they need to search for a new home. In 2024, the average market rent of vacant purpose-built rental units was \$512 higher per month compared to rents paid by renters in occupied units
- Many renters face challenges navigating the LTB process due to limited system knowledge, financial resources, and legal supports.

The most frequently identified reason for housing loss was not enough income

Reasons for housing loss, all respondents



Respondents could select more than one answer

Implementation of Council Direction

- Council provided **24 directives** in CC28.2
- All directives have been **completed or are in progress.**

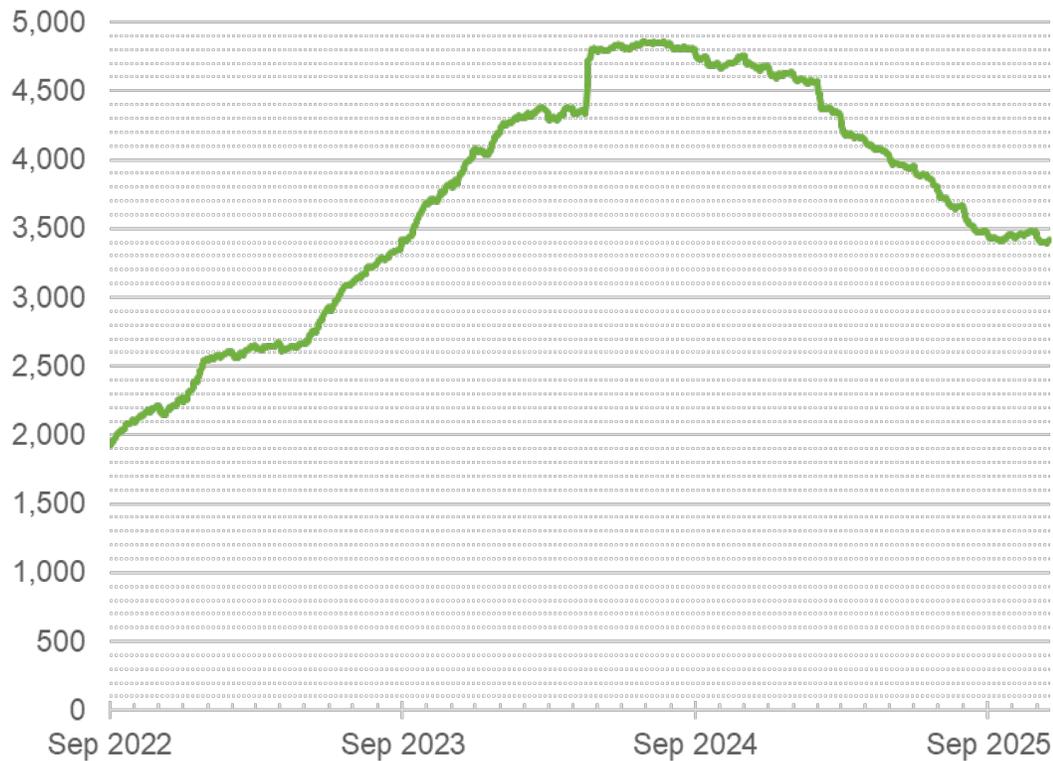
| Status | | Count | Examples |
|--|---|-------|---|
| Complete |  | 15 | ABR Analysis Tool Training, Refugee Roundtable, Human Rights Training and Letter to the Federal Government. |
| In progress (complete upon report adoption) |  | 4 | Access to Shelter Framework, Refugee Engagement Strategy, and Report back on all recommendations from CC28.2. |
| In progress or ongoing |  | 5 | Access T.O. Public Education Campaign and Tracking Access and Housing Outcomes. |

Access to Shelter Framework

- A **structured guide** that provides clear roles, responsibilities and criteria to support analysis and implementation of proposed changes to eligibility.
- Considers 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.
- Outlines **process 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.

Refugee Service System Transition

Total nightly
refugee claimant clients



Total bed nights before permanent housing,
refugee claimant clients



Refugee Service System Transition

- Currently, there are approx. 3,400 refugee claimants in the shelter system
- More than 80% have been in shelter longer than six months, with an average length of stay of over 18 months, compared with less than six months in 2022
- Urgent operational measures have been identified to:
 - continue to stabilize the system and further reduce the number of refugee claimants in shelters
 - support a transition towards a dedicated, sustainable and resilient refuge system, and
 - address the financial pressures related to IHAP funding being available until 2027

Refugee System - Operational Measures

- **Length of stay target:** Up to six months with extension possibility for exceptional circumstances
- **Refugee status applications:** Submission within two months where possible to access Ontario Works and Interim Federal Health and align with IHAP
- **Enhanced case management:** Using IRCC Toolkit for structured guidance to case managers and refugee claimants from entry
- **Enhanced outreach and information sessions:** Separate for case managers and refugee clients, focused on options to support clients to housing independence, case planning, COHB limitations, etc.

Access to base shelters: through Central Intake

Operational measures have been discussed with and are supported by the Refugee Service System Roundtable and other internal and external stakeholders

Approving the Emergency Family Shelter Supports (EFSS) Program

Purpose

- Provides temporary financial support to secure short-term accommodations for families when shelters are full
- Ensures no family is left unsheltered while shelter referral pending

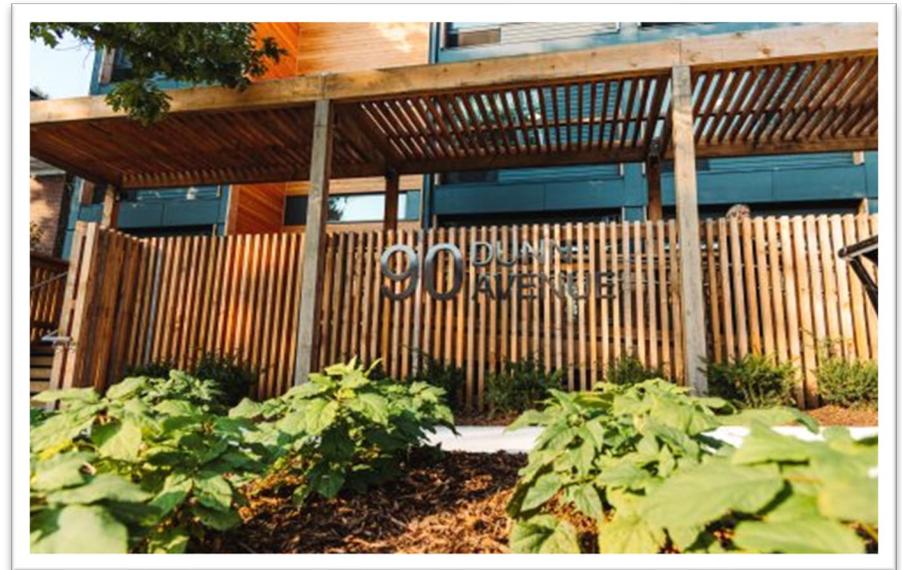


Eligibility and Process

- Families experiencing homelessness with children under 18 and/ or a pregnant person in the 3rd trimester; active Ontario Works recipients
- Administered jointly by TSSS' Central Intake (CI) and Toronto Employment & Social Services

Strengthening Health Partnerships to Improve Care and Transitions

- TSSS is expanding integrated health services through partnerships with health providers and hospitals
 - *Working with Ontario Health – Toronto, Inner City Health Associates (ICHA), hospitals, and community providers to deliver primary care, mental health, and harm reduction supports across settings*
- Coordinating transitions from hospital to shelter with Humber River Health to reduce readmissions.

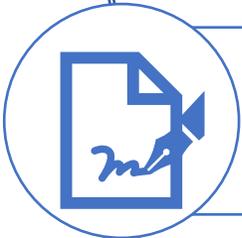


Supportive housing at 90 Dunn Ave. in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood.

Data, Research & Continuous Improvement



TSSS maintains strong partnerships with community agencies, researchers, and governments to generate data and research that improve programs and outcomes



Report seeks authority to enter research and data-sharing agreements and to provide letters of support for academic grant proposals



Strengthened data and research partnerships will improve understanding of client needs and support better policy, service design, and measurement of outcomes.

Thank you

