



June 23 2025

To Members of Toronto City Council,

Housing is health care. But in the absence of housing, not only does the health of homeless people decline, they have no decent, safe, restful, and appropriate places to heal – especially shelter spaces that are medically supervised.

As an organization of health workers who work closely with a network of daytime drop-in services, outreach, community and health care services supporting homeless people in Toronto, we see people with no housing and complex health conditions all the time – conditions that can only be healed with rest and medical supervision. This includes homeless people recovering from serious surgeries, amputations, wounds, and infections. But in the absence of medically supervised shelter spaces, let alone housing or enough shelter of any kind, homeless people are too often discharged to drop-ins and the streets.

Within the scope of our work and resources, we do not have the capacity to support a person recovering from an amputated leg, or heart surgery, or a broken hip outside of the hospital or medical spaces. We dearly need the appropriate spaces for people to recover once no longer needing an acute care bed. Spaces that include the necessary equipment, infrastructure, and staff to provide the care that people need.

This is a longstanding and serious service gap in Toronto. The outcome is that people do not heal, or they heal poorly, and our workers experience the deep moral pain of being able to do very little for people with serious conditions. We also know that the median age of death for homeless men in Toronto is 50 years old, and for women is 36 – in part because of a lack of health care infrastructure for people without homes.

Being on the front-lines, we also know that people who are discharged from the hospital are often immediately sent back to the Emergency Department. And, of course, all of this comes at a massive financial and resource cost to hospitals, paramedics, and social services. Medically supervised shelter spaces as a model can work to address this gap by providing options for safe care plans to allow people space and time to recuperate, help prevent the vicious cycle of re-admissions and ease avoidable suffering.

We need to end people being discharged to nowhere. Until there is housing for all, the city must allocate shelter space for people pre- and post-hospitalization, where they receive the rest and care they need and deserve. Toronto must create medically supervised shelter space.

Signed,

Organizations

Accessible Housing Network
Butterfly Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network
Canadian Street Soccer Association
Centre for Independent Living in Toronto
College Street United Church
Health Providers Against Poverty
Nellie's
Right to Housing Toronto (R2HTO)
Safe Space Drop-in, St. Stephen-in-the-Fields
Social Justice & Advocacy Committee, Anglican Diocese of Toronto
Social Planning Toronto
Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness
Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
Ralph Thornton Community Centre
Red Door Family Shelter
West Scarborough Community Legal Services (WSCLS)
Workers' Action Centre

Front-line Workers

Ali Serjeant, Research Associate & Community Support Worker
Alison Armstrong, Community Support Worker
Andrew Lee, Psychiatry Resident
Andrew Townsend, Health Promotion Officer
Angie Hocking, Minister and Community Organizer
Anne Egger, Nurse Practitioner (Retired)
Antonella Morra, Housing Counsellor
Catherine Oliver, Physician
David Morrison, Housing Specialist
Emily Bellicoso, Family Physician
Gregory Cook, Outreach Team Lead
Gregory Keefe (MSW, RSW), Outreach and Social Worker
Jacqueline Vincent, Psychiatrist
James Deutsch, Physician
Jennifer Hulme, Physician
Jirjees Al-shammaa, Crisis Worker
Joyce MacDonald, Acting Director of Independent Living
Judy Waldman, Nurse (Retired)
Kristen Creek, Physician
Lanadee Lampman, Registered Nurse (Retired)
Laura Fairley, Registered Nurse
Lorraine Lam, Case Manager
Madison Joyce, Registered Nurse
Maggie Helwig, Reverend and Drop-in Manager

Maria Scotton, Respite Support Worker
Marina Classen, Case Manager
Michaela Beder, Physician
Naheed Dosani, Physician
Naomi Berlyne, Income Security Health Promoter
Natalie Tremblay, Nurse Practitioner
Paige Homme, Physician
Raghu Venugopal, Emergency Physician
Ritika Goel, Family Doctor
Sadia Zafar, Manager Newcomer Support Services
Samantha Green, Family Physician
Sarah Follett, Physician
Sina Sayyad, Medical Student and Steering Committee Member