

SISTERING

July 7, 2025

To Members of Toronto City Council,

We are writing on behalf of the Sistering Board of Directors in strong support of the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy - *EC22.3 Highlights of the 2024 Street Needs Assessment and Advancing the City's Shelter Infrastructure*. This is a critical opportunity to develop gender-responsive shelters for women and gender-diverse people in Toronto.

Sistering has served women and gender-diverse people experiencing homelessness and housing precarity for over 40 years. The community we serve makes up nearly 40 percent of the known homelessness and shelterless population in Toronto. But we know that because so many women and gender-diverse people live in hidden homelessness, this number is likely much higher.

Our community is vulnerable. The women and gender-diverse people we serve are survivors of gender-based and intimate partner violence, human trafficking, and other trauma histories. When women and gender-diverse people enter homelessness, they are also more vulnerable to experiencing abuse and violence.

Recent data from Toronto Public Health (see: [Deaths of People Experiencing Homelessness 2.0 | Tableau Public](#) and <https://womenshomelessness.ca/torontodeaths>) shows that this picture is getting worse, not better. Women and transgender people experiencing homelessness in Toronto are dying far younger than in previous years. Since 2022, deaths among transgender people have also spiked. Many of these deaths occurred because unhoused cis- and trans-women and gender-diverse people are living in unsafe and precarious conditions. Women and gender-diverse people should not have to flee violence only to end up at risk of more violence.

There are far fewer emergency shelter beds available to women and gender-diverse people. What's more, many women avoid the mainstream shelter system altogether because of the very real and perceived dangers they have experienced in the system. Without adequate and gender-specific shelter and housing supports for our community, this crisis will only continue to escalate.

There is urgent need for the City of Toronto to establish a clear vision of the women's shelter system in the 10-year strategy. At Sistering, our mission is to ensure that the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness can access the safety and security they need.

Signed,

Gail Di Cintio, Chair
Sara Fruchtmann Vice-Chair
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Sistering