



Ms. Olivia Chow
Mayor
Toronto City Hall
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RE: Deputation Regarding Item [2025.EC22.3](#) – Highlights of the 2024 Street Needs Assessment and Advancing the City's Shelter Infrastructure

Dear Mayor Olivia Chow and Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written deputation on behalf of **Neighbourhood Pods TO (NPTO)**—a grassroots network of community workers, advocates, and resident-led organizations committed to supporting low-income communities across Toronto through direct engagement, capacity-building, and coordinated response.

We are writing today in **strong support** of the **Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS)** and the City of Toronto's urgent efforts to advance the development of **new, purpose-built shelter infrastructure** across all districts. The findings from the 2024 **Street Needs Assessment (SNA)**, as outlined in the current report (EC22.3), reaffirm the urgency and scale of the housing and homelessness crisis in our city.

This current item builds upon a prior discussion—**Item 2025.EC20.5**—which was postponed at the May 6, 2025 meeting to be considered in alignment with the broader 2026 Shelter Infrastructure Plan. NPTO continues to monitor this process and commends the City for taking steps toward long-term and systemic shelter infrastructure planning.

Key Points and Recommendations:

1. Purpose-Built Shelter Infrastructure Is Critical

We applaud the City's commitment to replacing temporary hotel shelters with permanent, purpose-built, and community-integrated spaces. However, the scale of the infrastructure gap remains stark, and we urge City Council to prioritize **expedited site acquisition** and construction, particularly in under-served wards.

2. Accelerate RGI and Supportive Housing Integration

While shelters are vital, they are inherently **interim solutions**. We call on the City to **increase investment in Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)** and **supportive housing**, ensuring that shelter pathways lead directly into long-term, stable housing.

3. **Innovative Solutions: Condo Acquisitions for Refugee and Emergency Housing**

Given current market conditions in Toronto's condo sector, NPTO encourages the City to explore the **purchase or long-term leasing of full blocks of new condos**, which can be transitioned into non-profit or co-operative housing specifically for:

- Refugee claimants
- Seniors exiting shelter systems
- Women and families fleeing gender-based violence

These opportunities could provide cost-effective, turn-key solutions while avoiding the long lead time of new construction. Models for this already exist in other jurisdictions.

4. **Ensure Community-Driven Micro Shelter Initiatives**

We are encouraged by the City's forthcoming Expression of Interest (EOI) for **micro shelter pilot projects**. NPTO supports innovative, community-led solutions for transitional shelter, and we urge the City to ensure that non-profit organizations and local residents are prioritized in the EOI process—not just institutional developers or third-party contractors.

5. **No Further Delays**

While we understand the complexity of intergovernmental negotiations, the **\$416.4 million funding gap** should not stall progress. The City must do everything in its power to advance shovel-ready projects and engage all orders of government to close this funding gap. In the meantime, we support reallocation from available reserves and leveraging partnerships with the philanthropic sector to accelerate action.

Conclusion

The shelter system is one piece of a broader housing continuum. While we continue to advocate for systemic reform, including zoning equity and an expansion of social housing stock, shelters remain an urgent, life-saving necessity. Toronto must act boldly and immediately to ensure that no one is left outside due to infrastructure shortfalls or bureaucratic delay.

Thank you for your time and your ongoing commitment to housing equity. We remain available to contribute further to this conversation and would welcome the opportunity to collaborate on future consultations.

In solidarity,



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