

2025 Update on SafeTO Implementation

Date: April 29, 2025

To: Executive Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto consistently ranks among the safest cities in Canada and globally. However, this sense of safety is not experienced equitably across all communities. Disparities in violence, crime and well-being persist, especially in neighbourhoods and for populations facing socioeconomic pressures and systemic inequities. City Council and multiple agency partners have committed to respond to these concerns through SafeTO: Toronto's 10-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (SafeTO).

The following report provides an update on the outcomes of Phase 1 (2022-2024) implementation of SafeTO and outlines the priorities for Phase 2 (2025-2027) implementation. With over 90 per cent of the 26 actions identified in SafeTO completed or in-progress, the report highlights some of SafeTO's achievements and identifies actions that require a renewed focus for the City of Toronto and partners across all sectors and levels of government to build a safer, healthier and more resilient Toronto.

The City developed SafeTO in response to provisions under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, which required all Ontario municipalities to prepare and adopt a community safety and well-being plan by July 2021. Community advocacy on rethinking how public institutions respond to community violence significantly shaped the City's approach to these legislative requirements. As per O. Reg. 414/23 of the *Act*, municipal councils must review and, if appropriate, revise the plan four years after the day the plan was adopted and every four years thereafter. The City is required to complete its review of the plan before July 14, 2025.

City Council unanimously adopted SafeTO in July 2021, introducing a fundamental shift in how Toronto addresses community safety, moving from reactive emergency responses to a culture of prevention. The plan also applies a public health approach to safety. It defines safety as more than just the absence of crime, emphasizing the need for protective factors like stable housing, accessible services, strong social connections and opportunities that allow children, youth, and families to thrive. By prioritizing a public health, data-informed, and people-centred approach, SafeTO aims to tackle the root causes of insecurity and violence to create lasting, transformative change.

To bring this bold vision to life, SafeTO includes 26 actions across seven strategic goals that will be implemented through a phased approach. This approach was outlined in the SafeTO Implementation Plan, which was approved by City Council in February 2022.

During Phase 1 (2022-2024) of SafeTO implementation, the City focused on four priority actions that resulted in the following achievements:

- The City launched the Toronto Community Crisis Service in 2022, establishing it as Toronto's fourth emergency service. Since its inception, the Toronto Community Crisis Service has responded to more than 25,000 mental health crisis calls, resolved 78 per cent of calls transferred from 911 without police involvement and in 2023, contributed to a 4.5 per cent decrease in mental health related 911 calls.
- The City established the Violence Prevention Toronto Office as a vehicle for multi-sector coordination with institutional partners, other levels of government and community partners to develop comprehensive violence reduction strategies. The Violence Prevention Toronto Office has organized Integrated Safety Coordination Teams in six geographic SafeTO Zones that have led to 60 multi-sector responses to violent incidents, including shootings and stabbings, and mobilized 70 interventions in response to emerging trends of community violence between April 2023 to January 2025.
- The City strengthened community crisis response protocols to better support victims and communities impacted by violence through the expansion of the Community Crisis Response Program to seven-day-per-week deployment across Toronto. From 2022 to 2024, the Community Crisis Response Program has responded to 1,844 critical incidents and achieving an 88 per cent response rate within 48 hours.
- The City launched the SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment, integrating key datasets across institutions to inform evidence-based policies. The SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment has enabled the development of the Toronto Transit Commission's Safety Dashboard, which tracks safety incidents and informs transit safety planning.

Building on this foundation, Phase 2 implementation of SafeTO will sustain Phase 1 efforts and focus on the following four SafeTO priority actions from 2025 to 2027:

- Develop a comprehensive approach to address gender-based and intimate-partner violence, in partnership with City divisions and agencies, including the Toronto Police Service.
- Implement responses to Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- Engage residents and build community capacity to lead safety initiatives.
- Strengthen multi-sector collaboration through partnerships and integrated investments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development recommends that:

1. City Council request the Executive Director, Social Development in collaboration with the relevant City divisions, agencies and corporations to continue to advance the goals and actions of SafeTO: Toronto's 10-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and report back to City Council on a progress report in 2027.
2. City Council request the Executive Director, Social Development in collaboration with the relevant City divisions, agencies, and corporations to negotiate and enter into agreement(s) with other governments, institutions, agencies and vendors as required to advance SafeTO initiatives, including information and privacy agreements and request for proposals processes in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor.
3. City Council forward the 2025 Update on SafeTO Implementation to the Toronto Police Service Board, Boards of Directors of Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Toronto Public Library, Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire Viamonde and Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir.
4. City Council request the Federal Government continue funding the Crime Prevention Grant and Building Safer Communities Fund to support SafeTO violence prevention and intervention programs and initiatives, in collaboration with community partners.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report provides an update on Phase 1 (2022-204) implementation of SafeTO: Toronto's 10-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and outlines the priorities for Phase 2 implementation.

The implementation of SafeTO Phase 1 (2022-2024) focused on building a strong foundation through key initiatives that have transformed how Toronto approaches community safety and well-being. Building on the achievements of Phase 1, Phase 2 focuses on additional priority actions from the current plan, which will be implemented within existing corporate resources (including staff) as well as requiring new investments, including partnerships with external agencies and other levels of Government.

Since the SafeTO Plan was adopted in 2021, the City has invested over \$60.6 million gross and \$55.7 million net in community-led violence prevention and interruption programs and to build partnerships with community organizations delivering frontline services. This amount reflects direct investment and excludes administrative costs of the program. In addition, financial support from the Federal Government is essential to showcase the collaborative efforts behind the SafeTO implementation plan.

Funding to sustain Phase 1 and begin implementing Phase 2 in 2025 is part of the 2025 Operating Budget for Social Development and includes funding of \$6.8 million from the Federal Government through the Crime Prevention Grant and the Building Safer Communities Fund, which are set to expire by December 31, 2025, and March 31, 2026, respectively. SafeTO has been implemented using City resources as well as Federal grants. Efforts continue to take place to secure new sources of funding through inter-governmental engagement and seeking additional partners.

Required funding to advance the four priority actions of Phase 2 SafeTO implementation, as outlined in Attachment 3: SafeTO Phase 2 Priority Actions, will be requested in the 2026 Budget and future Budget processes for consideration along with other City priorities, subject to the City's financial resource capacity.

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

EQUITY IMPACT

The City recognizes the importance of ensuring that all Torontonians, regardless of their race, gender, family composition or other intersecting identities have equal opportunity to enjoy a sense of safety and well-being. SafeTO recognizes that systemic discrimination has negatively impacted how Indigenous, Black, racialized and equity-deserving communities, including women, 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, people that experience homelessness, newcomers and residents with precarious immigration status, and people who live on low incomes, experience community safety in Toronto.

SafeTO's focus on prevention and community-led models benefits these populations by reducing the involvement of enforcement-based interventions while increasing connections to culturally responsive services, supports and opportunities for Indigenous, Black, racialized and equity-deserving communities. For example, in 2023, the City provided financial support to the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations to launch the Indigenous Crisis Line for 2-Spirited and urban Indigenous individuals experiencing mental health challenges. The Indigenous Crisis Line provides critical mental health supports including crisis intervention, culturally appropriate referrals, and advocacy. To date, the service has responded to over 2,400 calls for support.

Social Development has leveraged the City's equity assessment tools, including the Equity Lens tool, the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Analysis Tool to inform the development and implementation of SafeTO actions. The implementation of SafeTO is also guided by the goals of the City's Reconciliation Action Plan.

DECISION HISTORY

At its October 9 and 10, 2024 meeting, City Council requested through MM22.21 - Request for Federal and Provincial Support in Bail Reform, that staff collaborate with the Toronto Police Service and other relevant local stakeholder organizations to collect

data on the impact of current bail policies on public safety and report back with recommendations for reforms to both the Federal and Provincial governments.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM22.21>

At its July 24 and 25, 2024 meeting, City Council adopted EX16.30 - Community Safety and Well-being and Schools and requested the Executive Director, Social Development to report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee on responses to youth violence, including the feasibility of creating a minimum of one Youth Space or Youth Hub in each of the City's 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and emerging neighbourhoods, in consultation with community-based organizations.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EX16.30>

At its June 26 and 27, 2024 meeting, City Council adopted MM19.8 - Supporting the City of Toronto in Joining the Strong Cities Network and Hosting a Future Strong Cities Summit in October 2025, providing direction for the City of Toronto to join the Strong Cities Network and assess the feasibility of hosting its Global Summit in Toronto in 2025.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM19.8>

At its December 13, 14 and 15, 2023 meeting, City Council adopted MM13.34 - Taking Action on the Declaration of Intimate Partner Violence as an Epidemic and provided direction for the development of a working group which could include relevant City divisions and agencies and gender-based violence and intimate partner violence community organization.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MM13.34>

At its November 8 and 9, 2023 meeting, City Council adopted MM12.12 - Endorsing Toronto as a Signatory of the Strong Cities Network Fourth Global Summit New York City Mayoral Declaration in Fighting Hate, Extremism and Polarisation, and to support its enduring principles, goals and objectives.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MM12.12>

At its July 19 and 20, 2023 meeting, City Council adopted CC8.2 - Declaring Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic in the City of Toronto, and directed City staff, in collaboration with community organizations serving victims of intimate partner violence and the Toronto Police Service, to consider the best ways to actualize this declaration through community safety, well-being, and other related plans and making meaningful investments to the programs and services that prevent intimate partner and gender-based violence and support those who face it.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.CC8.2>

At its February 2 and 3, 2022 meeting, City Council adopted EX29.2 SafeTO Implementation Plan report and work plan and provided direction to enter into appropriate partnerships to support the implementation, adapt and innovate implementation of the actions and deliverables in the Plan as required, in response to the changing needs of community, subject to funding approval.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EX29.2>

At its July 14, 2021 meeting, City Council adopted EX25.4: SafeTO: Toronto's 10-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and directed the Executive Director, Social Development to report to the December 7, 2021 Executive Committee with an implementation Plan.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.EX25.4>

Other Relevant Decision History for SafeTO Implementation: 2017-2021

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-175068.pdf>

COMMENTS

Toronto consistently ranks among the safest cities in the world. However, this sense of safety is not shared equally among all Torontonians. According to the Listening to Toronto public opinion survey conducted in 2024, about 6 in 10 Torontonians reported feeling safe. Many communities, particularly those facing systemic inequities and socioeconomic challenges, continue to experience higher exposure to violence, crime and instability.

In 2024, following a three-year decline, Toronto experienced a 34 per cent increase in gun violence, disproportionately affecting youth aged 12 to 29. This age group represented 58 per cent of those involved in firearm-related incidents while making up only 23 per cent of the population. Geographic disparities are also stark with 46 per cent of all firearm-related incidents in 2024 occurring within just six areas of the city that represent only 22 per cent of Toronto's population.

These patterns reinforce the urgency for long-term, bold approaches to ensure that all Torontonians can thrive in a safe, healthy and resilient city. SafeTO: Toronto's 10-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (SafeTO) is driving these new approaches. SafeTO was developed in response to provisions under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, which required all Ontario municipalities to prepare and adopt a community safety and well-being plan by July 2021. As per O. Reg. 414/23, municipal councils must review and, if appropriate, revise the plan four years after adoption and every four years thereafter, with Toronto's review due before July 14, 2025.

In July 2021, City Council adopted SafeTO's goals and actions, which were developed in consultation with over 2,500 stakeholders and community advocates. The plan also aligns with other City strategies, including Our Health, Our City: A Mental Health, Substance Use, Harm Reduction and Treatment Strategy for Toronto, Housing TO 2020 - 2030 Action Plan, TO Prosperity: Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy, Downtown East Action Plan, Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Ontario municipalities do not receive any direct investments from the province to implement the Community Safety and Well-being Plans, but the Ministry of the Attorney General, Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services have been collaborating at an operational level to support with some areas of implementation.

Working Together to Build a Culture of Prevention

SafeTO introduces a fundamental shift from reactive emergency responses to a culture of prevention. The plan applies a public health approach to safety. It defines safety as more than just the absence of crime, emphasizing the need for protective factors like stable housing, accessible services, strong social connections, and opportunities for families to thrive.

To advance this vision, SafeTO identifies 26 actions across seven strategic goals that will be implemented through a phased approach. These goals are: 1) Reduce vulnerability, 2) Reduce violence, 3) Advance Truth and Reconciliation, 4) Promote healing and justice, 5) Invest in people, 6) Invest in neighbourhoods and 7) Drive collaboration and accountability.

To efficiently implement and maximize the impact of SafeTO actions, participating City divisions, agencies, corporations and external stakeholders have focused on the following approach:

- **Strengthening multi-sector collaboration:** Collaboration in the past has been mainly informal and reliant on individuals and circumstances. The City and its partners are formalizing these relationships through the development of collaborative models that will facilitate more effective and efficient services and responses to issues undermining community safety and well-being in Toronto.
- **Building the capacity of communities to respond to safety concerns:** SafeTO emphasizes the need to work with community to identify and implement culturally and locally relevant solutions to community safety. Since 2021, Social Development has invested over \$60.6 million in community-led violence prevention and interruption programs and partnerships with community organizations delivering frontline services.
- **Using data to enable effective planning and decision-making:** To ensure that decisions and interventions are evidence informed, Social Development is building its data infrastructure so that the City and its partners can better collect, share and utilize data to inform decision-making.
- **Investing in youth safety and well-being through targeted violence prevention and intervention strategies:** To shift from reactive emergency responses to youth violence, the SafeTO advocates for greater investment in prevention and intervention programs and approaches. The work of the Violence Prevention Toronto Office, City youth programs and the Mayor's Youth Safety Task Force are playing a key role in better coordinating supports for youth to mitigate crime and violence.

The following sections of the report highlight how the City is applying this approach in the implementation of SafeTO to address vulnerability, community violence and enhance community well-being. The sections describe:

- the implementation of Phase 1 (2022-2024) and its outcomes, which are further detailed in Attachment 1: 2025 Community Report and Attachment 2: Status of SafeTO Actions and Outcomes,
- actions that will be prioritised in Phase 2 (2025-2027) SafeTO implementation with more detail provided in Attachment 3: SafeTO Phase 2 Priority Actions, and
- other community safety initiatives across the City that are aligned with SafeTO goals.

SafeTO Phase 1 Implementation: Building the Foundations

The following section describes the execution and outcomes of the four priority actions in Phase 1 (2022-2024) implementation of SafeTO. For a detailed breakdown of all actions and outcomes, see Attachment 2: SafeTO Actions and Outcomes.

Action 1.3: Embed the Toronto Community Crisis Service as a well-resourced first-response service city-wide

The Toronto Community Crisis Service is a transformative approach to mental health crisis response in the city. Launched as a pilot in four areas of the city in March 2022 and now operating city-wide as Toronto's fourth emergency service, the Toronto Community Crisis Service is providing a community-based, client-centered and trauma-informed alternative to police response for mental health crises calls and well-being checks.

Since its inception in 2022, the Toronto Community Crisis Service has responded to more than 25,000 mental health crisis calls, resolved 78 per cent of calls transferred from 911 without police involvement and in 2023, contributed to a 4.5 per cent decrease in mental health related 911 calls. The Toronto Community Crisis Service continues to work with the Toronto Police Service, Toronto Paramedic Services, and Toronto Fire Services to identify further opportunities for call diversions and streamlining of business processes for call transfers.

In addition to providing mobile crisis intervention, the Toronto Community Crisis Service has expanded access to post-crisis care through more than 6,000 referrals to wraparound supports and by connecting more than 1,000 service users to ongoing case management. The service has also enhanced access to culturally appropriate mental health support through an Indigenous-specific mental health crisis line operated by 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations. Additionally, accessibility has improved through strategic partnerships with Toronto Public Library and Toronto Shelter and Support Services to provide crisis services at designated library branches and shelter bed access for clients.

The City continues to strengthen collaboration between the Toronto Community Crisis Service and other emergency services in alignment with the Auditor General's recommendations for improving emergency response in Toronto. This includes implementing collaborative training opportunities with Toronto Police Service to improve response effectiveness in situations requiring both services, as well as launching a call diversion pilot in 2025 with Toronto Paramedic Services to transfer low-acuity mental health calls to the Toronto Community Crisis Service. Through this collaborative and innovative approach, Toronto has positioned itself as a leader in crisis response, with multiple jurisdictions nationally and internationally seeking guidance to develop similar models.

Action 2.1: Develop a comprehensive multi-sector gun violence reduction plan

The Violence Prevention Toronto Office was created in 2023 to coordinate gun violence prevention, intervention, interruption, response and recovery efforts in Toronto through an integrated partnership model. Staff from the City of Toronto, Toronto Community

Housing Corporation, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Transit Commission, and Toronto Police Service are embedded in the Violence Prevention Toronto Office and work together to develop and implement initiatives that support gun violence prevention and reduction through a trauma-informed and public health approach.

For example, the Violence Prevention Toronto Office has organized Integrated Safety Coordination Teams comprised of frontline workers from relevant institutions to share information and coordinate prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts in geographic areas of the city that are most impacted by gun violence. From April 2023 to January 2025, the Integrated Safety Coordination Teams coordinated 60 multi-sector responses to violent incidents, including shootings and stabbings, and mobilized 70 interventions in response to emerging trends of community violence, including de-escalation, community safety planning and coordinating mental health supports for impacted community members.

Social Development has also invested in hospital-based violence intervention programs that place a social worker in a hospital setting to provide medical, psychological and social supports to individuals after a violent incident. The goal of these interventions is to promote positive alternatives to violence in order to reduce retaliation, criminal involvement and re-injury. The programs include:

- BRAVE program, which operates in the Sunnybrook Hospital, Scarborough Health Network and Humber River Hospital. BRAVE has served 164 individuals from 2022 to 2024.
- THRIVE program at St. Michael's Hospital, which focuses on youth ages 14-29 and has served 23 individuals from October 2023 to December 2024.

The City, through Social Development, has also been investing in violence prevention and intervention programming for youth and families:

- **Youth Violence Prevention Grants:** The grants provide annual funding to community organizations and grassroots partners that offer programs and services for youth and families impacted by violence. Between 2022 and 2024, over \$8.0 million was made available to community partners, including Indigenous-led and Black-mandated organizations. In 2024, the funding has benefitted 6,200 youth participants through programs and services such as conflict resolution training, employment support and job skills development, peer-to-peer mentorship, culturally relevant counseling and trauma-informed crisis prevention workshops.
- **Family Well-being Program:** The program focuses on building the capacity of parents, caregivers and extended family members to support youth, ages 10 to 29, most vulnerable to violence in Scarborough. In 2024, the program served 713 families through workshops, engagement events and individualized supports.
- **TO Wards Peace:** The program aims to mitigate the risks experienced by youth, ages 12 to 29, who are either at the centre of violence, justice involved, impacted by violence and/or experiencing ongoing risks and potential for further harm. Violence Disruption Workers with lived experience engage youth and provide them with supports alongside grassroots community organizations, and health and social service providers. Since 2024, this targeted program has resulted in 242 program enrollments, 88 violent incidents prevented, and over 1,200 hours of engagement with program participants.

Mayor's Youth Safety Task Force

Beginning in January 2025, Mayor Chow convened multi-sector partners, City staff and Councillor champions to lead high-level coordination related to youth safety across six key areas: 1) civic engagement, 2) youth employment, 3) educational environments, 4) family supports, 5) place-based violence reduction and 6) violence response. These meetings were a catalyst for the development of a comprehensive Summer Plan to provide youth and their support networks with a range of programs and events that will contribute to a safe and positive summer. The Summer Plan is expected to be finalized in early June.

In addition, the 2025 Operating Budget for the City Manager's Office included investments of \$5.0 million for youth programs in neighbourhoods most in need of support to help mitigate rising youth violence in Toronto. Examples of investments confirmed at this time include:

- Expansion of community recreation in 46 schools during the summer for youth ages 13 to 17 through collaboration between Parks and Recreation, Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board,
- Increasing access to summer camp for Toronto Community Housing Corporation tenants ages 6 to 12, and
- Launching a new initiative in collaboration with a local community agency that will offer meaningful paid employment experience to youth in underserved communities.

Action 2.3: Strengthen community crisis response protocols to better support victims and communities impacted by violence

Social Development has strengthened its community crisis response protocols by expanding the capacity of the City's community safety programs. These programs focus on leveraging community partnerships to address elevated risks of harm and providing healing and recovery supports to individuals and families.

In 2024, Social Development expanded the Community Crisis Response Program to provide seven-day-per-week deployment across Toronto, responding to violent and traumatic incidents including shootings, stabbings, community conflicts and gang-related activity. Operating on the pillars of intervention, prevention and preparation, the Community Crisis Response Program works with communities to develop localized safety plans and coordinate response protocols. Between 2022 and 2024, the Community Crisis Response Program responded to 1,844 critical incidents, conducted over 13,000 response activities, and achieved an 88 per cent response rate within 48 hours.

In addition to the expansion of the Community Crisis Response Program, Social Development has bolstered the following investments and programs:

- **FOCUS Toronto:** Through the coordination of weekly local situation tables, the program has been reducing risks of crime, victimization and improving community resiliency and well-being since 2013. Collaboratively led by the City, United Way of Greater Toronto, and Toronto Police Service, FOCUS Toronto connects vulnerable

individuals and families that are experiencing heightened levels of risk with targeted health and social supports. FOCUS Toronto expanded city-wide in 2024, with the addition of a seventh situation table and now brings together over 180 partners. Between 2022-2024, FOCUS Toronto reviewed 3,295 situations, with an 83 per cent reduction in acute elevated risks,

- **Community Violence, Well-Being and Recovery Project:** The Community Crisis Response Program invests in a continuum of services that provides access to trauma counseling, support groups, faith-based supports, and specialized wellness services for Indigenous and Black residents. Since 2022, the Community Violence, Well-Being and Recovery Project has supported over 9,000 individuals with more than 5,000 hours of direct support including trauma counselling and arts-based interventions for youth.
- **Community Crisis Response Fund:** The City strengthened community crisis response by allocating over \$1.0 million from 2022 to 2024 to support 225 resident-led initiatives that promote healing, safety, and community resilience. These initiatives include counselling, arts-based therapy and workshops on conflict resolution and de-escalation.

Action: 7.1 Develop a comprehensive strategy to share, integrate and analyze data across multiple institutions for the purpose of informing real-time policy development and service planning.

The SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment was established as a multi-sectoral data and education resource to facilitate interdisciplinary analysis and reporting on the determinants of community safety and well-being. Over the course of Phase 1, the SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment has evolved into a central resource to connect SafeTO implementation partners with data and provide the analysis they need to inform community safety planning. It has advanced innovative research through partnerships with such institutions as the University of Toronto and Statistics Canada. The SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment has piloted several innovative initiatives to transform how the City and its partners collect, share and utilize data to understand complex safety and well-being challenges, target resources, and measure progress.

In Phase 1, the SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment has:

- Improved trust and efficiency between SafeTO partner institutions, including the Toronto Police Service, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto Community Housing and the Toronto District School Board when collaborating on community safety and well-being data projects.
- Increased capacity for internal and public data sharing, including the deployment of an internal SafeTO data hub and the launch of public dashboards. This includes the Community Safety on Transit Dashboard, which was viewed over 4,000 times in 2024, and the recently launched SafeTO Dashboard.
- Increased data literacy and capacity among community-partners working on SafeTO initiatives, including investing approximately \$0.33 million to support community data capacity and asset mapping projects.

In developing these products, the SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment has identified core data infrastructure, processes and competencies that

can be scaled up and sustained to improve the ability of SafeTO partners to analyze issues across various levels and sectors and enable more effective planning and decision-making through integrated data analysis.

SafeTO Phase 2 (2025-2027) Implementation: Strengthening Collaboration and Policy Development

Building on these achievements, Phase 2 will focus on sustaining existing Phase 1 priorities and undertaking four new priority actions identified in the SafeTO plan. The priorities selected for Phase 2 implementation are based on Council direction, community input, and areas where coordinated, multi-sector action can drive meaningful change for Toronto residents. More detailed information on these priority actions is provided in Attachment 3: SafeTO Phase 2 Priority Actions. Targets, with measurable impacts for residents will be developed in Phase 2 of SafeTO implementation, with a report back to City Council in 2027.

Action 2.2: Develop a Comprehensive Gender-Based and Intimate-Partner Violence Reduction Plan

Harmful social ideas about gender can manifest in discriminatory policies, programs, and in interpersonal interactions. These forms of gender-based violence put women, girls, men and boys of trans experience, Two-Spirit and non-binary people at significant risk of victimization.

Statistics Canada defines gender-based violence as violence committed against someone based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. An average of 102 women and girls were victims of gender-related homicide per year in Canada, totaling 1,125 between 2011 to 2021. Statistics Canada also reported that, in 2021, more than 11 million Canadians over the age of 15 reported at least one experience of gendered intimate partner violence. The rate of intimate partner violence is particularly high for LGBTQ+ women, Indigenous women, women living in poverty, and women with disabilities. Women and girls are further disproportionately impacted by human trafficking, a highly gendered crime. Police-reported incidents show that 95 per cent of identified victims of human trafficking in Canada were women and girls in 2019.

Recognizing these concerning trends, City Council declared gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic in 2023, followed by direction for City staff to develop a working group with representation from relevant City divisions, agencies, corporations and external community partners to develop a plan of action. People and Equity is leading the work on gender-based and intimate partner violence in collaboration with Social Development. To support an all-systems approach, People and Equity has launched an internal cross-divisional and inter-agency staff working group, in collaboration with the Indigenous Affairs Office. Engagement with external community partners is underway to ensure that the City's plans are co-developed with community organizations providing services and supports to survivors.

Social Development has also undertaken the following initiatives to help address gender-based and intimate partner violence:

- Allocated over \$1.1 million to organizations in Toronto that are leading research and improvements to service access for survivors.
- Launched the Access Plan for Two-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary Youth (“the Access Plan”) in October 2024 to improve health and social outcomes for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary youth by reducing barriers to City programs over the next three years. Under the Access Plan, staff leading the implementation of SafeTO have committed to ensure gender inclusive, policies, programs and services in community safety planning.
- Collaborated with City divisions, agencies, and corporations, community partners, and survivors of sex trafficking and labour trafficking to implement the End Trafficking TO initiative.

In support of SafeTO Phase 2 implementation, People and Equity will work closely with Social Development and the Toronto Police Service to develop comprehensive actions to address gender-based and intimate partner violence.

Action 3.2: Develop an implementation plan to guide the City's response to the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Taking action on gender-based violence and intimate partner violence is evolving in tandem with the City's response to the calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and Two-Spirited peoples (MMIWG2s). Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to go missing or be murdered than other women and girls in Canada. Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people are most at risk of violence in urban centres, such as Toronto. Of known missing and murdered cases, 70 per cent of women and girls have disappeared from urban areas. Of these known cases 60 per cent were also found murdered in urban areas.

The City's Reconciliation Action Plan made recommendations to embed an Indigenous lens and Indigenous leadership in SafeTO's initiatives to promote healing and justice as well as efforts to become a trauma-informed City. With upward of 50 Indigenous-specific service providers located within the city, Toronto is well-situated to provide culturally grounded, trauma informed supports and services to MMIWG2S affected families and survivors of violence.

For SafeTO Phase 2 implementation, the Indigenous Affairs Office in collaboration with People and Equity, Social Development and Indigenous-specific service providers will develop an implementation plan to respond to the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry on MMIWG2S.

Action 5.1: Engage Residents and Build Community Capacity to Lead

Toronto residents, community organizations and businesses are integral to advancing SafeTO's goals. During SafeTO Phase 2 implementation, Social Development will continue to empower communities to play an active role in safety planning and implementation. For example, staff will undertake a redesign of the local Safety Networks. Safety Networks bring together residents, community-based organizations,

institutions and other stakeholders to develop hyper local responses to violent and traumatic incidents and to build locally driven initiatives that prevent them. This includes identifying local safety concerns, mobilizing supports and implementing solutions.

The City has also recently launched the SafeTO BIA pilot in collaboration with the Downtown Yonge BIA and an advisory of 10 BIAs to better understand and respond to the challenges facing local businesses related to community safety and well-being. Through the pilot, a dedicated staff from the business community works with City staff to facilitate engagement opportunities for BIAs to share information, build relationships and mobilize site specific safety and well-being initiatives.

Expanding engagement with residents to build capacity for data collection is also underway as part of SafeTO implementation. In 2024, the SafeTO Collaborative Analytics and Learning Environment provided a Mapping Prevention Grant to three not-for-profit organizations: Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities, Jane and Finch Centre and Albion Neighbourhood Services, to support community-led mapping and data visualization projects. The organizations recruited community-based research ambassadors to support the development of digital storytelling platforms. Building community's capacity to tell their own story through these data platforms elevates community participation in place-based safety planning.

During Phase 2 of SafeTO implementation, Social Development will continue to build the capacity of community members to play an active role in the planning and implementation of place-based safety and well-being initiatives.

Action 7.3: Strengthen Multi-Sector Collaboration through Partnership and Integrated Investments

The City has made progress in building partnerships between diverse stakeholders to respond to emerging needs through place-based responses and integrated investments. The Downtown East Action Plan is a successful example of this integrated and place-based approach, which can inform the City's responses to community challenges in other parts of Toronto.

The Downtown East Action Plan brings together government, businesses, community organizations and residents to address the interrelated challenges to community safety and well-being in the Downtown East, such as homelessness, mental health and experiences in addiction, including substance use. In 2024, two neighborhoods in the Downtown East, Downtown Yonge East and Moss Park, recorded the highest concentration of suspected opioid overdose calls in Toronto. The City is committed to continue working together with partners to navigate changes to services available across the city, such as the reduction in supervised consumption sites, as well as looking ahead to new service models that help to address mental health and substance use.

City Council adopted the first five-year Downtown East Action Plan (2020-2024) in 2019. The plan was renewed for 2025-2030 in July 2024, with \$2.2 million, over three years, for Social Development to enhance services in the area, such as outreach and crisis intervention services, cleanliness initiatives and increase engagement with

Indigenous partners and people with lived experience as part of the Dundas Sherbourne Neighbourhood Revitalization Plan.

In Phase 2 of SafeTO Implementation, Social Development will continue to lead these efforts and leverage the combined resources and expertise of multiple stakeholders in the Downtown East to improve community safety and well-being.

Complementary Initiatives

The following section provides an update on City initiatives and programs that complement and enhance the work of SafeTO, including youth focused programming and spaces, restorative justice initiatives and efforts to combat hate and build social cohesion in Toronto.

Youth Spaces

Youth hubs and enhanced youth spaces are critical community infrastructure, providing dedicated environments where young people can connect with peers, develop new interests, and engage in local issues. These spaces serve as protective factors against violence by offering supervised programming, skill development and positive social connections in communities where youth may face heightened vulnerability.

Multiple service providers operate youth spaces in Toronto, for example:

- Parks and Recreation operates 20 Enhanced Youth Spaces that are equipped with dedicated staff and operate year-round for five to six days a week, based on community need. Since 2014, the Enhanced Youth Spaces have evolved to offer diverse programming beyond traditional recreation. Program offerings include arts instruction, employment and entrepreneurship support, and leadership development through youth advisory councils.
- Toronto Public Library has 28 branches offering Youth Hubs that operate year-round for five days a week. Youth Hub programming focuses on education and digital literacy supports, leadership development and social inclusion initiatives. A nutritious snack is also provided daily with programming. Toronto Public Library was funded to open 3 additional Youth Hubs in the fall of 2025.
- The Province of Ontario also funds 5 Youth Wellness Hubs that provide integrated health and social services.

In 2024, City Council directed staff to report back on the feasibility of creating a minimum of one Youth Space or Youth Hub in each of the City's 31 Neighborhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) and emerging neighborhoods. An assessment of all these neighborhoods indicates that the City provides substantial coverage of youth spaces. There are approximately three NIAs without an Enhanced Youth Space or a Youth Hub. An assessment of the costs to close the service gaps in these three areas is underway. The Province of Ontario also needs to be engaged to explore the expansion of Youth Wellness Hubs in Toronto.

Access to Justice, Restorative and Responsive Reintegration Initiatives

In neighbourhoods across Toronto, residents have been speaking out about their experiences with gun violence and their concerns about the bail system. In 2023, the Toronto Police Service conducted community consultations with over 300 residents from six different neighbourhoods to gather perspectives on gun violence and bail. What emerged was a compelling narrative of how gun violence affects daily life, particularly for youth and families. Some communities also expressed frustration with what they perceived as a "revolving door" justice system.

Beyond enforcement, residents that participated in the consultations called for solutions that include more community centers, mentorship programs and educational support for youth. These perspectives highlighted a desire for both immediate safety measures and long-term preventative approaches that address the root causes of violence. The Justice Centre model is a promising approach that addresses some of the concerns raised in the Toronto Police Service community consultations.

Led by the Ministry of the Attorney General in partnership with the Ontario Court of Justice, Toronto Police Service, the City of Toronto and community organizations, Justice Centres are innovative community courts that integrate justice, health, and social services in one location. By operating in community settings, they provide coordinated, wrap-around support for vulnerable accused persons. This approach helps reduce recidivism, limits time in remand and improves outcomes for high-needs individuals involved in the justice system. There are two Justice Centres currently operational in Toronto supported by an embedded City staff on the Ministry of Attorney General's team.

The Downtown East Justice Centre services high-needs individuals at the intersection of poverty, homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use issues. Since May 2021, the Downtown East Justice Centre has processed 2,370 cases with the following outcomes: 74 per cent of participants demonstrated some level of reduced involvement in the criminal justice system in the 12 months following their first appearance, with 45 per cent accumulating no additional cases at all. The City supports these efforts by providing dedicated Streets to Homes housing workers and investing in specialized case management delivered by community partners.

The Toronto Northwest Justice Centre works specifically with youth aged 12 to 17, providing accelerated case management and opportunities to improve social and economic outcomes through education, life skills development and family support. The Toronto Northwest Justice Centre has processed over 1,700 youth cases since May 2021, with 71 per cent of youth referred to the Education Advocate showing improved educational status. Most significantly, 75 per cent of high-risk 17-year-olds who resolved their matters were not re-arrested in the following 12 months. The City supports the Toronto Northwest Justice Centre by funding a full-time Community Case Manager who provides dedicated support to youth involved in the court system. The City also invests in life stabilization funds to ensure expedited access to services for youth in high-risk situations in addition to providing a dedicated Toronto Youth Partnerships for Employment (TYPE) Outreach Counsellor to support participants who are facing complex employment barriers.

While bail reform remains an important consideration, expanding and enhancing the Justice Centre model and strengthening reintegration processes provides a complementary strategy that can address underlying causes of crime while maintaining community safety. Further consultations are required with human rights-based groups, legal clinics, and equity-deserving communities to develop a prevention-focused approach that addresses root causes of violence and creates lasting, transformative change in line with SafeTO's core goals.

Building Social Cohesion

One of the most widely accepted definitions of social cohesion, that of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, elaborates the multiple paths of work required to foster and sustain public safety. It highlights the efforts needed to protect and promote the well-being of all members of society by addressing exclusion and marginalization. These efforts centre on building a sense of belonging and trust among residents and providing the opportunity for upward mobility for all. Such wider efforts are included within the City's plans in addressing hate related crimes.

The need to address hate related crimes remains a priority for the City. Although recent data on hate crime occurrences fluctuates, it is important to recognize that some hate crimes in Toronto remain unreported. Toronto Police Service has not released the 2024 Annual Hate Crime Statistical report. However, in 2023, Toronto Police Services reported a 47 per cent increase in hate crimes, rising from 248 occurrences in 2022 to 365. With religion, race/ethnic origin, and sexual orientation as the most targeted categories. In early 2025, available police data illustrates a 48 per cent decrease in hate crime occurrences, and a 39 per cent decrease in hate crime calls for service to Toronto Police, compared to the same period in 2024. Since 2022, the Toronto Police Service has increased its Hate Crimes Unit from six officers to, currently, 31 dedicated members to better investigate respond to incidents.

The City of Toronto has also compiled anti-hate resources on its anti-hate webpage and distributed information about resources to community agencies and places of worship to better respond to hate incidents in Toronto. In 2024, the City also launched a Toronto for All public education campaign, focussed on allyship. The campaign used 100 print and 70 digital shelter ads to engage residents in combatting discrimination.

Planning is underway for the 2025 Toronto for All campaign, which will emphasize fostering belonging and inclusion to combat hate. The City also continues to collaborate with the Strong Cities Network, a global coalition of over 260 cities dedicated to addressing all forms of hate, extremism, and polarization. Toronto will be hosting the network's Sixth Global Summit in December 2025. This summit will be an opportunity to showcase the city's innovative community safety programs but to also learn about best practices from across the world.

Next Steps

While the development and implementation of Community Safety and Well-Being Plans was provincially mandated through the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*,

Ontario municipalities have not received any direct investments from the province to implement their plans. As a result, the City has implemented SafeTO using its own resources as well as grants from the Federal Government, which will be ending in early 2026.

City staff will need to undertake efforts to secure new sources of funding to both sustain Phase 1 initiatives and advance the Phase 2 (2025-2027) implementation of SafeTO. It will require inter-governmental engagement and seeking additional partners to address these funding shortfalls. The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and other advocacy bodies have also called upon the province to invest in municipalities to support the implementation of Community Safety and Well-being Plans.

In 2027, staff will report back to City Council with an update on the progress of Phase 2 of SafeTO implementation and efforts to secure funding to continue to advance SafeTO implementation. The report back will also:

- Describe the implementation and impact of priority actions identified for Phase 2,
- Update on any enhancements to Phase 1 priorities, and
- Outline the next phase of SafeTO implementation.

CONTACT

Scott McKean, Director (Acting), Community Safety and Well-being, Social Development, 416-392-8628, scott.mckean@toronto.ca

Nicole Watson, Associate Director (Acting), Violence Prevention and SafeTO, Community Safety and Well-being, Social Development, 416-392-9797, nicole.watson@toronto.ca

Clara Ganemtoire, Manager, SafeTO and Community Risk Intervention Team, Community Safety and Well-being, Social Development, 416-394-4042, clara.ganemtoire@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Mohamed Shuriye
Executive Director (Acting)
Social Development

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: SafeTO 2025 Community Report
Attachment 2: Status of SafeTO Actions and Outcomes
Attachment 3: SafeTO Phase 2 Priority Actions