



Don Valley Community Legal Services

January 22, 2026

To: City of Toronto Budget Committee

Re: Comments on the City's 2026 Budget

Don Valley Community Legal Services is a community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario. Our catchment area includes Wards 14, 15, 16 and 19, and sections of Wards 11 and 12. We serve many diverse communities and our clients are lower-income, racialized, and primarily renters.

We provide services in four areas of law: housing law, employment law, immigration law, and income supports. The number of calls to our intake line have been increasing each year and the number of housing law cases continues to grow. In 2025, we received 14,289 calls to our intake line and opened 5,370 cases. Of these cases, 1,928 were housing related, making up 36% and much greater than the other areas of law.

Housing continues to be a serious issue in Toronto and across the province. Yet we have not seen improvements and the number of clients seeking our assistance is growing. With Bill 60, we know tenants will be facing greater barriers to sustaining their tenancies and we will see fast-tracked evictions. We applaud the City and Mayor Chow for standing up for tenants and speaking out against this Bill. We are also very appreciative of the increased funding for programs that assist renters over the past few years. We have seen the difference these programs make in our clients' lives.

We unfortunately cannot help every tenant and many issues they face will not be addressed by the Landlord and Tenant Board in a timely manner. Many tenants are facing hardships and rely on City programs where there are no other options.

In 2025, DVCLS became a new agency that can make direct referrals to Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC). This was due to the increased funding EPIC received, allowing them to hire more staff, assist more renters, and expand their service. We referred numerous tenants to EPIC last year, preserving tenancies and keeping Torontonians in their homes. We hope the City will consider an increase in funding to EPIC again this year.

The Toronto Rent Bank is also another indispensable program funded by the City. We see many arrears cases where tenants are at risk of losing their homes. The Rent Bank

45 Overlea Blvd., Unit 200, Toronto ON, M4H 1C3

Tel: (416) 441-1764

Fax: (416) 441-0269

www.DonValleyLegal.ca

has assisted many of our clients and has meant less people ended up unhoused. We support the \$2.6 million increase for the Rent Bank in the 2026 Budget.

The protection of existing affordable rental units is also a key part of solving the housing crisis. This is why we are very supportive of the Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition (MURA) Program. We have seen too many buildings lost to renovictions, demovictions or other issues that displace tenants. MURA has helped preserve the affordable rental housing we already have. We would like to see more funding in the 2026 Budget for MURA.

Many of our clients also face maintenance and repair issues in their buildings. RentSafeTO is a program that helps tenants get action when a landlord is neglecting these issues. We are pleased to see an increase in funding to hire more staff for RentSafeTO. We hear from tenants across our catchment, from 500 Dawes to Thorncliffe Park. These tenants are dealing with serious maintenance issues and without RentSafeTO or enforcement by the City, they would not be able to get the repairs needed to live in safe and healthy homes. We hope the City will continue increasing funding and improvements to RentSafeTO, including remedial action.

We were pleased to see additional funding to expand the Air Conditioner Pilot Program, doubling the number of portable air conditioners from 500 to 1,000 in 2026. This will help more low income and vulnerable tenants stay safe and cool inside their homes this summer.

Finally, the Toronto Tenant Support Program (TTSP) and the organizations the program funds are extremely important. We cannot represent tenants on Above Guideline Increases (AGIs), however we receive many calls from tenants asking how to fight AGIs. There have been a growing number of AGIs in our catchment and they are pushing lower income tenants out of our community. We frequently refer clients to the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR) and the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations (FMTA). We collaborate with the FMTA on tenant meetings and workshops as well. We cannot do this work alone and we are grateful for the organizations funded by the TTSP.

In conclusion, we applaud the increase in funding to Rent Bank and RentSafeTO. We hope to see further funding for EPIC, MURA and the TTSP. We appreciate the opportunity to share our feedback on the City's 2026 budget.

Sincerely,



Kirk Cooper
Chair, Board of Directors
Don Valley Community Legal Services