



Dear City Council,

YWCA Toronto is the largest multi-service nonprofit organization serving women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in Toronto. As the operator of multiple shelters and permanent housing programs, we have a deep understanding of the challenges facing women and gender diverse people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in Toronto.

Since 2020, we have expanded our housing portfolio from 517 units to 824 in 2025 in an effort to better meet the demand for safe, deeply affordable housing for women, gender diverse people and their families. Recognizing the intersecting challenges faced by the communities we serve, we have also expanded our wraparound supports to include mental health services, food pantries, and food banks, ensuring participants have access to holistic, dignified support. For example, in 2025, we provided specialized mental health and addiction supports to 30 women and gender diverse people through our South Etobicoke housing program, and our Church Street housing program partnered with Thunder Woman Healing Lodge to implement an ongoing food security and healthy eating initiative for tenants.

The issues outlined in the Housing Rights Advisory Committee's summary are reflective of our circumstances at YWCA Toronto. Key issues we are experiencing in our shelter and housing programs revolve around the lack of wraparound support available to address the complex and individualized needs of the people who access our services. Particularly for those living with mental health challenges or substance use disorder, and those with disabilities or who are aging in units that are unable to accommodate their changing needs.

Without predictable and timely access to wraparound support services, we will not be able to move from a system focused on getting people housed, regardless of whether or not that housing suits their needs, to a system focused on *keeping* people housed. We also recognize that realizing the right to housing must go beyond building new units. We must also strengthen tenant protections, protect existing affordable housing, invest in non-market housing such as nonprofit housing and community land trusts, and ensure those with the greatest housing needs are prioritized. To reduce housing instability and ensure people are able to stay in their homes, we must work to end renovictions, control skyrocketing market rents, reverse the loss of affordable housing stock, and end discrimination, gender-based and intimate partner violence, and other systemic issues impacting access to permanent, safe, and affordable housing.

Indigenous, Black and racialized women and gender diverse people, newcomer women and gender diverse people, 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, and those living with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by the aforementioned systemic issues, serving as an additional barrier to housing. As such, intersectionality and individuals' unique barriers must be considered in all efforts to develop coordinated, ongoing, sustained investments in supportive housing, and wraparound support services.

We strongly support the Housing Rights Advisory Committee's recommendations that City Council work with the Government of Ontario and Government of Canada to develop coordinated, ongoing, sustained investments in supportive housing, and the specific calls for funding for wraparound support services. We also strongly urge City Council to implement a gendered lens and ensure consideration of the specific barriers for women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in accessing and maintaining housing in Toronto.

YWCA Toronto is committed to supporting the city's efforts to work with the Government of Ontario and Government of Canada to advance the right to housing for all and ensure the unique realities and needs of women, girls, and gender diverse people are included in all efforts to do so. We are available to meet to share our expertise and work collaboratively to address the housing needs of women, girls, and gender diverse people in Toronto.

Please reach us at executiveoffice@ywcatoronto.org to arrange a meeting.

Deepa Mattoo, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Toronto

Sami Pritchard, Director of Advocacy and Communications, YWCA Toronto

These comments are being submitted for distribution to City Council ahead of City Council Meeting 43, on July 29, 30, and 31, 2026.

RE: Item - 2026.EX33.28 Advancing More Supportive Housing to Address Homelessness and Create Pathways to Long-Term Housing Stability <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.EX33.28>.