

## **Progress Update on Drop-In Sector Stabilization Efforts**

**Date:** May 25, 2026

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

---

Daytime drop-in programs are a key component of the housing and homelessness service continuum, providing low-barrier access to essential supports for individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness and contributing to stronger and more cohesive communities. Services may include meals, hygiene facilities (e.g., showers and laundry), social and recreational programming, and information and referrals, including to health services. Daytime drop-ins function as a critical access point for homelessness response, prevention and shelter diversion. Through Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS), the City of Toronto directly funds 23 daytime drop-in programs.

The daytime drop-in sector is under increasing pressure due to the affordability crisis, demands for social and recreational programming, growing food insecurity, and reduced access to community and clinical services with the closure of supervised consumption service sites, including two additional closures expected in June 2026. In this context, the stabilization efforts outlined in this report focus on sustaining the current drop-in service model.

In February 2026, City Council directed TSSS to work with the drop-in sector to establish a working group to review core wage principles, adequate resourcing and overall sector stabilization ([CC38.1](#)). TSSS partnered with the Toronto Drop-In Network (TDIN) to convene the working group, which began meeting in March 2026 to identify and prioritize actions to advance sector stabilization.

This report provides an update on the progress to date, including the launch of the working group, development of a structured engagement plan, key discussion themes from initial sessions, and preliminary findings.

Next steps include continued collaboration between TSSS, TDIN, and the working group to develop a prioritized set of draft recommendations and a stabilization plan aligned with City-wide priorities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

The General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services recommends that:

1. Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

---

There are no immediate financial impacts resulting from the recommendation in this report.

The 2026 Operating Budget for Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) includes daytime drop-in grant funding of \$8.2 million, \$1.3 million for Creating Health Plus, and one-time funding of \$0.5 million for enhanced harm reduction support for daytime drop-ins. Grant funding to daytime drop-ins was expanded in the 2026 budget through a two per cent cost of living adjustment increase and a four per cent funding enhancement across daytime drop-in grants. A new investment of \$0.100 million was also made to fund bulk purchases of winter and hygiene supplies to be distributed to all drop-ins through the Toronto Drop-In Network.

TSSS will continue to work collaboratively with the Toronto Drop-In Network and the sector working group to develop recommendations to inform a drop-in sector stabilization plan. Any financial impacts arising from the implementation of these recommendations will be submitted through the 2027 and/or future budget processes for TSSS, as required, for consideration along with other City priorities, subject to the City's financial and resource capacity.

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

## **EQUITY IMPACT**

---

Toronto's homelessness service system serves a range of equity-deserving groups, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, seniors, low-income households, people with disabilities, Indigenous and Black communities, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, youth, and newcomers. These groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness due to systemic barriers, including colonialism, anti-Black racism, discrimination, and inequitable access to housing, income and health supports. Daytime drop-ins play an important role in the homelessness service system by providing low-barrier, accessible supports for individuals who may face challenges accessing more

formal supports. Ongoing work to develop a drop-in sector stabilization plan, addressed in this report, embeds an equity lens, including through supporting early and distinct engagement with Indigenous partners. Resulting efforts to stabilize drop-in programs, including by strengthening staffing, resources, and supporting consistent, high-quality service delivery, will support reducing barriers and improving outcomes for equity-deserving communities.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

---

At its meeting on February 10, 2026, City Council requested the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services to work with the drop-in sector to assemble a working group to review core wage principles, adequate resourcing and overall stabilization of the sector to help inform the 2027 budget, with a progress report back to the June 9, 2026, meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee ([2026.CC38.1](#)).

At its meeting on February 10, 2026, City Council approved an increase to the 2026 Operating Budget for Toronto Shelter and Support Services of \$0.100 million to support the City's funded and unfunded drop-in centres to fund bulk purchases of winter and hygiene supplies to be distributed to all drop-ins through a partnership with the Toronto Drop-In Network ([2026.MPB38.1](#)).

At its meeting on February 11, 2025, City Council approved an increase to the 2025 Operating Budget for Toronto Shelter and Support Services of \$0.8 million to enhance drop-in services, including an extension of the Creating Health Plus program ([2025.MPB27.1](#)).

At its meeting on January 24, 2025, the Budget Committee recommended that, in order to address the growing pressures in the shelter system, the Mayor continue to invest in drop-in sites and shelters, including in access to food and safety, reflecting the role of daytime drop-ins in addressing system pressures in the homelessness service system ([2025.BU9.1](#)).

## **COMMENTS**

---

### **Overview of Daytime Drop-in Programs**

Daytime drop-in programs are a key component of the housing and homelessness service continuum, providing low-barrier access to essential supports for individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness and contributing to stronger and more cohesive communities. Services may include meals, hygiene facilities (e.g., showers and laundry), social and recreational programming, and information and referrals, including to health services.

These programs offer safe, inclusive spaces that support basic needs, promote social connection, and facilitate access to broader community services. Daytime drop-ins

function as a critical access point for both homelessness response and prevention, supporting individuals to stabilize their circumstances and support diversion from entry into the shelter system. These grant funded programs are distinct from emergency shelters and 24-hour respites and are not required to adhere to the [Toronto Shelter Standards](#) or Toronto Respite Standards or [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#).

There are approximately 47 daytime drop-in programs operating across Toronto, 23 of which are funded by the City of Toronto through grant funding. The City is also the primary funder of The Toronto Drop-In Network (TDIN), a sector-led coalition of drop-in operators that advances coordination and shared priorities across drop-in providers. The TDIN represents all City-funded daytime drop-in programs, as well as approximately 24 non-City-funded programs.

The core service delivery requirements for all City-funded daytime drop-ins are outlined in Attachment 1. While these requirements reflect minimum service expectations, many drop-in programs provide a wider range of supports and services aligned with community needs identified in drop-in funding applications, submitted to the City through the last daytime drop-in open call in 2022. Program reporting for the first half of the 2025-2026 fiscal year indicates that City-funded drop-ins supported people experiencing or at risk of homelessness through 618,430 drop-in visits, 536,432 meals served on-site, and 163,432 take-out meals.

System pressures including the affordability crisis, growing food insecurity, demands for social and recreational programming, and reduced access to community and clinical services with the closure of supervised consumption service sites are putting increased pressure on the drop-in sector and the broader health and social service system.

In this context, daytime drop-ins often respond to a wide range of complex and evolving client needs that extend beyond their core service model, reinforcing their important role within the broader system. In recent years, the sector has reported growing demand for services and increasing complexity of needs among service users. City-funded program data reflects this trend, with average daily visits increasing by nine per cent between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, and a further 18 per cent between 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

Following the 2025 closure of supervised consumption service sites, some drop-in programs have reported increased demand for low-barrier health and social supports and overdose response, services that were previously provided through those sites. These service gaps and resulting pressures, including growing demand for drop-in services and increasing complexity of client needs, are expected to intensify with the closure of two additional supervised consumption service sites on June 13, 2026.

The stabilization efforts outlined in this report focus on sustaining the current drop-in service model as defined by Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) and detailed in Attachment 1. Under this model, drop-ins are positioned to provide safe and low-barrier spaces where people experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access meals, social and recreational programming, hygiene services, and referrals to specialized services and other supports.

## Existing Drop-in Sector Stabilization Initiatives

The City of Toronto, through TSSS, supports several initiatives aimed at strengthening the operational capacity of daytime drop-in programs. These investments have been made in addition to regular drop-in grants funding, which was expanded in the 2026 budget through a two per cent cost of living adjustment increase and a four per cent funding enhancement across daytime drop-in grants.

TSSS is providing one-time funding to select daytime drop-in programs to enhance harm reduction and substance use supports in the context of the ongoing closure of supervised consumption service sites and resulting service gaps. Drop-ins were prioritized to receive the one-time funding based on a mapping of anticipated impacts of the closures. Funding enhancements are intended to increase the capacity of drop-ins to meet increasing demand for services and complexity of service needs within programs and in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Through the Creating Health Plus program, operated by the North York Harvest Food Bank, the City funds centralized food procurement and delivery to 47 City-funded and non-City-funded drop-ins across Toronto. Food is purchased through [FoodReach](#), North York Harvest's social enterprise to reduce food procurement costs. Distribution volumes are aligned to the number of meals served at each site per week.

In addition, TSSS is increasing access to winter and hygiene supplies for both City-funded and non-City funded daytime drop-ins through a \$100,000 investment, approved in the 2026 budget. In partnership with TDIN, TSSS is exploring options for operational efficiency that can support timely access to essential items, particularly during periods of peak seasonal demand.

## Drop-In Stabilization Work Group

City Council directed TSSS to work with the drop-in sector to establish a working group to review core wage principles, adequate resourcing, and overall stabilization of the sector ([CC38.1](#)).

In response, TSSS partnered with TDIN to convene a working group of 12-15 senior leaders from drop-in organizations. Membership was designed to reflect diverse sector perspectives, including City-funded and non-City-funded providers, smaller and larger sites, multi-service and stand-alone organizations, and providers serving different geographic areas and populations. A list of work group members is included in Attachment 2.

The working group began to meet in March 2026 to collaboratively identify and prioritize actions to advance sector stabilization based on the current drop-in service model.

In line with the division's commitments from [Meeting in the Middle Engagement Strategy and Action Plan](#), TSSS is also meeting with Indigenous partners that operate drop-in services. Dedicated engagement sessions have been initiated to identify service

challenges and opportunities to strengthen culturally appropriate, Indigenous-led service delivery.

## **Drop-In Stabilization Work Group Engagement Plan**

TSSS and the TDIN developed a structured engagement plan to guide the working group. The plan leveraged findings from TSSS-led engagements with the drop-in sector in 2025 (including management, frontline staff, and service users), to inform the division's Strategic Plan, currently under development.

The engagement plan outlines a strategic approach to working group sessions, including:

- Defining key themes (core wage principles, adequate resourcing, sector stabilization);
- Identifying current challenges and barriers;
- Developing outcome statements (future state goals);
- Developing draft recommendations that address current state challenges and outcomes; and
- Prioritizing a short list of recommended actions for TSSS, the daytime drop-in sector, and other City divisions and inter-sectoral partners, where relevant.

Findings from the working group will be shared with the wider drop-in sector (including frontline staff, drop-in participants and volunteers) by the TDIN for feedback, validation and to identify where additional, focused feedback sessions may be required.

Engagement findings will be consolidated into a stabilization plan identifying recommended actions, responsible leads, proposed timelines, and accountability measures. While some recommendations are expected to focus on City-funded drop-ins, the plan will provide a roadmap for advancing broader sector stabilization. Recommendations in the plan that do not directly pertain to the City may be advanced by the TDIN in collaboration with drop-in sector organizations. The plan will reflect the ongoing nature of sector stabilization and will align with divisional priorities, City-wide strategies, and available resources.

## **Progress and Key Findings – Work to Date**

This report provides an update on the progress to date. As of mid-May 2026, the Drop-In Stabilization Work Group had completed seven working sessions.

Over completed working sessions, the Drop-In Stabilization Work Group:

- Validated current state challenges, based on prior engagement findings;
- Finalized definitions and outcome statements for key themes (adequate resourcing, core wage principles and sector stabilization);
- Identified priorities, potential actions and implementation leads related to these themes;

- Began refining priorities and actions into scoped draft recommendations with implementation steps and roles.

Through these sessions, City staff and sector partners identified areas of consensus where increased coordination, resourcing, or policy alignment could support sector stabilization.

The working group identified that sector stabilization requires both additional resources and enhanced coordination and collaboration across the sector and between sectors, including the shelter, housing and health services sectors. The group also identified the need for a flexible approach to stabilization recommendations that reflected the diversity of daytime drop-in program structures and service modalities and the ongoing nature of stabilization efforts.

Preliminary resourcing related findings:

- Addressing wage levels in the drop-in sector can improve recruitment, retention, and staff wellbeing, strengthening overall workforce stability; and
- Funding models that are transparent, flexible, and/or have extended funding timeframes may support collaboration, responsiveness to emerging needs, and longer-term planning.

Preliminary systems strengthening and coordination findings:

- Sector stabilization can be improved through increased awareness, recognition, and integration of the role of drop-ins in the housing and homelessness continuum and in other related sectors; and
- Ongoing communication, collaboration, and place-based, population-based and system-level planning are key to achieving sustainable improvements.

At the time of drafting this report, work was ongoing to confirm the language, framing and scoping of draft recommendations.

## **Next Steps**

Over May and June 2026, TSSS will continue to work with the TDIN and the working group to refine findings into a prioritized set of draft recommendations for TSSS, the drop-in sector, and other City divisions and inter-sectoral partners, where relevant. These will be shared with the broader sector for validation and feedback.

The recommendations will inform a drop-in sector stabilization plan, outlining actions, leads, timelines, and accountability measures, aligned with TSSS and City-wide priorities. The recommendations will also inform the City's next open funding call for daytime drop-ins planned for Q4 2026, intended to update the approved funded daytime drop-in programs and providers since the last call was held in 2022. This funding call will provide an opportunity to ensure alignment of the daytime drop-in service model with current service needs, pressures, and operational realities. All organizations

delivering daytime drop-in services will be invited to apply for City funding through the funding call.

## **CONTACT**

---

Kate Richardson, Director, Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention Services, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, 416-338-4896, [kate.richardson@toronto.ca](mailto:kate.richardson@toronto.ca)

Karlene James, Director, Service Planning and Integrity, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, 416-397-7607, [karlene.james@toronto.ca](mailto:karlene.james@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

---

Gordon Tanner  
General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services

## **ATTACHMENTS**

---

Attachment 1 – Service Delivery Requirements for City-funded Daytime Drop-ins

Attachment 2 – Drop-In Stabilization Work Group – Member List

## **Attachment 1: Service Delivery Requirements for City-funded Daytime Drop-ins**

Per Toronto Shelter and Support Services' core drop-in service model, [service delivery requirements](#) for City-funded daytime drop-ins include:

- Provide non-judgemental, trauma-informed, and anti-oppressive services rooted in harm reduction and Housing First approaches;
- Engage with participants experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
- Provide a safe, low-barrier indoor space;
- Prepare and provide nutritious meals and snacks to participants;
- Provide inclusive and interactive activities and events to promote social cohesion and togetherness;
- Provide direct or indirect supports to help people find and sustain housing;
- Make referrals to specialized services in the community as needed;
- Participate in City committees and working groups, if or as required;
- Compile, maintain, and provide records and activity data, as required; and
- Advance the City's funding priorities, including:
  - Strengthening our relationship with Indigenous communities and advancing reconciliation;
  - Focusing on equity;
  - Delivering high quality services;
  - Reducing chronic homelessness;
  - Developing integrated system responses; and
  - Strengthening and modernizing the sector.

## Attachment 2: Drop-In Stabilization Work Group – Member List

Table 1 - Drop-In Stabilization Work Group – Member List

Name	Title	Agency	Email
Melanie Joy	Executive Lead	Toronto Drop-In Network	tdin@tngcs.org
Leslie Gash	Executive Director	Toronto Shelter Network	leslie@toshelternetwork.ca
Nicola Holness	Director, Integrated Mental Health	Regent Park Community Health Centre	nicolah@regentparkchc.org
Candice Cosbert	Manager, Drop-In and Outreach	Covenant House	ccosbert@covenanthouse.ca
Christine Foster	Senior Manager, Housing Services	Dixon Hall	christine.foster@dixonhall.org
Natalia Semeekina	Manager, Adult Programs	LAMP	natalias@lampchc.org
Sheryl Lindsay	Director of Programs and Services	PARC	SLindsay@parc.on.ca
Bryan Douthwright	Advocacy and Outreach Program Manager	Weston King Neighbourhood Centre	bryand@wknc.ca
Gabriel Aboutbour	Director of Clinical Programs	Haven Toronto	gabriel@haventoronto.ca
Jessica Lee	Senior Director of Youth Services	Friends of Ruby	jlee@friendsofruby.ca
Maureen Squibb	Director, Community Services	Fred Victor	msquibb@fredvictor.org
Sheila Cranmer-Byng	Executive Director	All Saints Church Community Centre	sheila@allsaintstoronto.com

Name	Title	Agency	Email
Melissa Bosman	Manager of Satellite Programs and Services	Progress Place	mbosman@progressplace.org
Volletta Peters	Executive Director	Sistering	vpeters@sistering.org
Barb Panter	Drop-In Manager	The Neighbourhood Group	barbara.panter@tngcs.org
Maureen Fair	Executive Director	West Neighbourhood House	maureenfa@westnh.org