

May 4, 2026

To: Chair & Members of the Economic & Community Development Committee
From: Diane Chester, Neighbour, St. Felix Centre 24-hour Emergency Shelter
Re: **Item - 2026.EC28.4**

Based on the information gathered through FOI records and the signed Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS)/St. Felix Centre (SFC) Service Agreement, the City's handling of 629 Adelaide Street West demonstrates a significant accountability deficit in both shelter policy and public spending. The shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West is fully funded by the City of Toronto.

FOI records show there was no long-term, approved, or budgeted City plan for a new SFC respite facility. In fact, records suggest the opposite: RH2 Housing (federal housing program) was intended to replace the respite site at 25 Augusta Avenue, and there was never a formal commitment from TSSS to fund a new permanent facility for SFC. Despite this it appears SFC, on their own initiative, began looking for a new site identifying 65 Bellwoods Avenue.

However, SFC after weeks of negotiations and planning, lost the lease because SFC was unable to provide the neighbourhood with public safety assurances. This resulted in SFC leasing the site at 629 Adelaide Street West—costing approximately \$23.6 million more than the 65 Bellwoods Avenue site, despite serving the same number of beds (50).

Through the FOIs, funding for SFC and 629 Adelaide Street West appears to have occurred through scrambled, unclear, and poorly documented decision-making—at significant public expense and without transparent Council oversight due to delegated authorities.

As well, FOI records show that the final service agreement between TSSS and SFC was not signed by both parties until September 2025—several months after the shelter had already opened. Although the lease was signed in October 2023 and originally planned to open in November 2023 the facility did not open until July 21, 2025, raising serious concerns about governance, procurement discipline, and financial controls.

Cost Comparison

Item	65 Bellwoods Avenue	629 Adelaide Street West
Beds	50	50
Lease Term	10 years	10 years
Operating Costs	~\$3.0 million annually	~\$5.36 million annually
2025 Signed TSSS/SFC Service Agreement	N/A	\$2.68 million for 6 months (July–Dec 2025)
Annual Lease Cost	~\$407,484	~\$650,000
Cost Per Bed (Per Diem)	~\$164 per bed	~\$294 per bed*
Renovation Costs	\$250,000 (funded by landlord)	~\$4.5 million (paid by City of Toronto)

**For comparison: The Council approved TSSS 2024 Shelter Infrastructure Plan reported COVID shelter hotels costing \$253 per night and new purpose-built shelters at \$126 per night.*

This comparison raises serious questions about value for money, planning integrity, and how public funds are allocated—due to delegated authority.

In August 2023, our neighbourhood first learned about the shelter through a rumour. FOI emails show TSSS staff internally debated whether to describe the project as a “new” program or a “relocation,” ultimately deciding to frame it as a relocation.

One TSSS email states: “I don't think we should call it new. I was hoping we could call it a ‘relocation and expansion’.... I would stress at a community info meeting in case folks start to argue about service saturation and ‘why here’ nimbyism, etc.”

This demonstrates that public communication strategy was never focused on transparency, but on avoiding any scrutiny.

629 Adelaide Street West: Repeated Failures in Oversight and Compliance

In addition to escalating and unplanned financial costs, the project has created ongoing operational and compliance failures that continue to affect surrounding residents.

Community Safety Teams

This complaint concerns the City of Toronto’s contracting and oversight of One Community Solutions and “Community Safety Teams” (CSTs), which began repeatedly patrolling our residential neighbourhood at Adelaide Street West and Tecumseth Street on March 30, 2025—months before the shelter even opened. Apparently costing St. Felix Centre \$540,000 annually, these individuals wore yellow vests with the company’s name but otherwise dressed in plain clothes, often with hoods and face coverings, and did not provide identification when asked.

They repeatedly walked the same routes multiple times per day, photographed private property, stood outside homes for extended periods, and created what felt like constant surveillance of residents’ daily lives. After the 24-hour emergency shelter at 629 Adelaide Street West opened on July 21, 2025, CST members stationed themselves around the shelter perimeter and adjacent laneways, directly facing nearby townhomes and monitoring residents’ movements. Many residents—particularly women—found their presence disturbing, intimidating, and intrusive, yet no one was formally informed of their role, authority, or mandate.

Despite repeated efforts to seek answers from Toronto Police Service, City staff, and One Community Solutions, residents received no meaningful response.

Then it was publicly reported that on January 26, 2026, the City had cancelled all contracts with One Community Solutions after the Ministry of the Solicitor General advised that the organization was not licensed and could not lawfully act as security guards. It is deeply concerning that millions of dollars in City contracts appear to have proceeded without proper legal compliance or oversight, and that our residential neighbourhood was subjected to months of repeated patrols and illegal surveillance without transparency, justification, or accountability.

A full review of the City’s contracting process, legal due diligence, and the necessity of this security deployment is urgently required.

Noise Bylaw Violations – HVAC System

SFC installed a new large TRANE commercial HVAC unit, hoisted onto the roof on February 6, 2025, directly adjacent to surrounding homes and bedrooms, without any planned noise mitigation.

Although TSSS advised residents that the HVAC had been approved by Toronto Building in March 2025 as part of permitting, by September 2025 the system created an inhumane and constant hum and drone that forced neighbours to file repeated noise complaints—noise that is very specific to mechanical equipment—not ambient City noise.

On October 30, 2025, SFC and the building owner were issued an Order to Comply with the City’s Noise Bylaw by Municipal Licensing & Standards.

As of May 5, 2026, the noise will have persisted for nearly **240 days**. This is not ambient city noise—it is a constant mechanical hum and drone directly beside residential bedrooms.

Emails from shelter manager Mr. Gordon Tanner and ML&S advise our neighbourhood of the granting of multiple extensions to SFC and the building owner, with deadlines shifting repeatedly: December 5, then up to 120 days, then April 4, May 1, and now July 1—still without a confirmed resolution.

Inhumane noise occurs from as early as 5:00 a.m. and sometimes until after 10:00 p.m. When it finally shuts off, the difference in neighbourhood noise levels is profound.

This has significantly affected my quality of life. It wakes me, prevents me from opening windows facing the unit, and requires me to use noise-cancelling headphones in parts of my own home, particularly in my bedroom with the window open and closed.

Illegal Patio Fence

SFC designed, planned, and built a new large patio fence—attached to the building—during nearly two years of renovations. The patio faces directly onto bedrooms and living spaces. The shelter opened and the patio was already in full use, yet the structure was later deemed illegal by Transportation Services—even though permits had initially been approved.

This required retroactive approval from Toronto Community Council in October 2025.

Because of inaccuracies in the original staff report, a second report had to be issued, with no public notice provided to the surrounding neighbourhood.

New Exterior and Interior Lighting

SFC installed **new** bright LED exterior lighting on all four exterior walls of 629 Adelaide Street West, causing severe light trespass onto adjacent homes located only metres away.

The fixtures were mounted so high that parts of my home (mere metres from the shelter building) and backyard became unusable after dusk. Although City lighting standards exist to prevent this, they were not followed.

Multiple complaints were filed with the Councillor's office, TSSS, and SFC. A 311 inspection resulted in a site visit where I was told the existing bylaw only addressed direct beams of light entering homes and that nothing could be done. I was also informed that an updated bylaw addressing light trespass was being drafted.

I began raising these concerns on June 12, 2025, and received no response from SFC until July 24, 2025. The exterior lights were finally turned off on July 25, 2025. The public cost of installing this now-unused exterior lighting remains unknown.

SFC also installed new bright interior lighting and bright white blinds throughout both floors, including multiple windows directly facing neighbouring homes. Because the building now operates 24/7—where it was previously a daytime-only business—the lighting remains on for extended periods, often continuously.

This, again, made my yard unusable after dusk and forced me to keep windows and blinds closed because of the extreme brightness.

I began filing complaints in June 2025, but the issue was not addressed for six months despite repeated emails and no meaningful response from either TSSS or SFC.

Brown construction paper now covers the interior of one window facing our homes—and has remained there for months. Despite millions in renovation and operating funding, brown paper has become the “solution.”

Commercial Kitchen in a Residential Neighbourhood

SFC installed a new fully stainless steel commercial kitchen at 629 Adelaide Street West that now produces more than 150 meals daily—in the heart of a residential neighbourhood. Multiple odour complaints have been sent to both SFC and TSSS without any response.

This kitchen requires regular grease extraction and new ventilation systems located directly beside surrounding homes, generating extreme noise and odours.

Ironically, this commercial kitchen directly contradicts City Council's recent retail strategy decision restricting commercial kitchens in residential neighbourhoods.

Vent Siting, Odours, and Environmental Impacts

SFC also installed multiple new washroom and laundry vents in the south laneway, only metres from neighbouring homes, resulting in persistent and intolerable odours.

The placement of these vents reflects yet another failure to consider the immediate residential context.

Odour complaints have been filed with both the Province and Toronto Public Health. To date, there has been no meaningful response from TSSS or SFC and no solution has been implemented.

Conclusion

Residents are left asking fundamental questions:

What standards of fairness, oversight, accountability, financial rigour, and judgment are being exercised by senior City officials and City-contracted third parties?

How can a project with no approved long-term plan, no signed service agreement before opening, major unplanned capital expenditures, repeated bylaw failures, and ongoing unresolved impacts on residents proceed with so little accountability?

This is not just a neighbourhood issue—it is a very serious governance issue.

The shelter policy structure surrounding 629 Adelaide Street West reveals a broader accountability deficit within the City's shelter system: weak planning, poor transparency, delayed agreements, inadequate oversight, and no meaningful recourse for residents once problems emerge.

Stronger public accountability is urgently needed.

**Diane Chester, Neighbour
St. Felix Centre 24-hour Emergency Shelter**