



To: Economic and Community Development Committee

Date: May 5, 2026

Re: EC28.4 - 2027 Shelter Infrastructure Plan

The Toronto Shelter Network connects and supports Toronto's homelessness service providers and also prioritizes working alongside people with lived experience of homelessness, ensuring their voices, insights, and needs shape how services are designed and delivered. Together, we support emergency shelters, respites, and women's 24-hour drop-ins across Toronto to more effectively meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

TSN is submitting this letter to support the City's continued investment in shelter infrastructure through the 2027 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS). There is significant progress outlined in this report. The advancement of new shelter sites and the City's continued commitment to the HSCIS represents an important and necessary shift toward a more stable, coordinated shelter system. Moving away from temporary programs to purpose-built, permanent spaces is something our members strongly support.

From across our network, we see that this kind of long-term infrastructure planning makes a real difference. It creates more consistent environments for clients, supports better service delivery, and allows providers to plan with greater certainty. We also appreciate the City's efforts to strengthen community engagement and coordination across City divisions. These are critical elements in ensuring that new shelters are successfully integrated into neighbourhoods and supported by the broader system.

At the same time, we want to be clear: the pressures on the shelter system remain extremely high.

Across our network, agencies continue to operate at or near capacity, with increasing complexity in client needs, including mental health, substance use, and chronic homelessness. While the addition of 1,000+ new spaces is important, it will not, on its own, resolve these system pressures, particularly without sufficient affordable and supportive housing options for people to move into.

We would like to offer a few considerations to support successful implementation:

Firstly, timing and transitions. The plan relies on phasing out temporary programs as new sites come online, but many of these new shelters are still years away. Providers are concerned about what happens in the interim. We need clearer interim strategies to ensure people are not left in limbo as these transitions occur and how continuity of care will be maintained for clients during transitions.

Secondly, community integration and transparency. While the report notes improvements in community engagement, we continue to see resistance at the neighbourhood level. Continued efforts must go beyond information-sharing, it must actively build understanding, address concerns early, and include the voices of people with lived experience in a meaningful way.

Thirdly, continuing to prioritize equity and responsiveness across the system will be important. Our network includes providers serving diverse populations, and we encourage ongoing collaboration to ensure new sites are designed and operated in ways that meet those specific needs. Purpose-built infrastructure must also be matched with services designed to meet people's needs.

Finally, we welcome the opportunity for ongoing engagement with the City as this plan moves forward. The Toronto Shelter Network and its members are committed partners in this work and bring valuable on-the-ground insights that can support effective implementation.

In closing, we are encouraged by the direction of this plan and the City's commitment to building a more sustainable shelter system. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure these investments translate into meaningful improvements for the people we collectively serve.

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On behalf of the 32 organizations that form the Toronto Shelter Network