

June 2, 2026

Executive Committee
City Hall, Committee Room 1
100 Queen Street West
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor and Committee Members,

Re: Exploring Legal Services for the 2SLGBTQ+ community at The 519 Community Centre

The 519 Church Street Community Centre (The 519) has received a three-year grant from the Law Foundation of Ontario to expand legal support services for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who are unable to access legal aid, with a particular focus on trans women, gender-based violence survivors, newcomers and refugees. The proposed model would allow staff at The 519 to provide legal education and limited, direct legal advice to clients who fall outside the reach of existing legal aid programs, pro bono services, and community legal clinics.

The 519 currently operates a program where 519 staff refer clients to approximately 50 independent volunteer pro bono lawyers covering six to eight areas of law; however, 519 staff do not currently provide direct legal advice. The proposed program addresses identified gaps in family and immigration law services — areas in which The 519's staff have significant experience and in which complex cases, such as humanitarian and compassionate claims, are routinely ineligible for legal aid.

City of Toronto staff have determined that expanding The 519's functions to include direct legal advice constitutes a mandate expansion beyond the traditional scope of Association of Community Centres under the Municipal Code and Association of Community Centres Relationship Framework.

Discussions between The 519 and City staff began in December 2025. Given the urgency of client needs and evolving federal policy, this letter seeks to advance the necessary report for consideration at the July 2026 meeting of City Council, in order to enable The 519 to proceed with this time-sensitive and community-critical program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. Executive Committee request the City Manager, in consultation with the City Solicitor and Executive Director of the 519 Church Street Community Centre, as required, to submit a report on the following program to the July 21, 2026 meeting of the Executive Committee:
 - a. A mandate for staff of the 519 Church Street Community Centre to provide direct legal advice to clients who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQ community and do not qualify for other pro bono legal services or who face barriers to accessing legal services due to an identified service gap;
 - b. A strategy to mitigate liability, risk, and any other appropriate accountability measures to the 519 Church Street Community Centre, City and its employees when 519 Church Street Community Centre staff provide direct legal advice to clients;
 - c. Financial implications of expanding their mandate to include a program which provides legal services directly to members of the public free of charge; and
 - d. Potential conflicts of interest in such a program.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Moise
City Councillor
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre

CM/tj