

**Supporting Unhoused Rights Holders Working Group  
Meeting 8 – May 7, 2026**

**HRAC Members**

Diana Chan McNally (Working Group Chair)  
Elizabeth McIsaac  
Lindsey Lemieux  
Bee Lee Soh

**Consultation on Shelter User Advisory Group (SUAG) - City Staff & Community Partners**

Adwoa Afful, Policy Development Officer, Toronto Shelter & Support Services, City of Toronto  
Lauren Kimura, Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, City of Toronto  
Florenca Leston, The Neighborhood Group  
Masha Warari, The Neighborhood Group

**Consultation with the Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union - External Experts**

Angie Hocking, Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union  
Rachel Butler, Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union  
Sebastian Desormiers, Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union  
Eddi Esteban, Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union  
Aemero Mengesha, Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union

**Housing Secretariat Support**

Asha Sivarajah, Policy & Programs Coordinator, Housing Systems & Intelligence

The meeting of the Housing Rights Advisory Committee's Supporting Unhoused Rights Holders Working Group started at 1:30 p.m.

**Notes**

**1. Chair Updates & Discussion of HRAC Feedback and Key Priorities**

- The Working Group Chair shared that there would be a planned discussion item at the upcoming HRAC meeting on May 29, 2026 on the Committee's impact, advancement of its mandate, and key priorities for HRAC's second term, (if the Committee is restructured).
- Members will have the opportunity to share the challenges and successes they experienced during their time on the Committee.
- Members will also consider whether the structures of human rights bodies, such as HRAC, are well designed to ensure its members feel that they are able to share their ideas and inform the agenda.
- **Feedback**
  - Members wished the following key priorities could have been better advanced during their time on the Committee:
    - Understanding the City's progress in advancing supportive housing, (particularly modular housing), including limitations and considerations around increasing supportive housing supply;

- Barriers for people trying to exit the shelter system, including: the Province's funding cuts to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB);
- Concerns around housing adequacy and habitability within the existing stock of rent-geared-to-income housing (RGI);
- Shelter safety, including ensuring the shelter environment is safe for clients;
- Ensuring that complaints processes in City-run shelters are accountable and provide access to justice for clients.

## **2. Consultation – Shelter User Advisory Group (SUAG) – Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) & The Neighbourhood Group**

### **• Overview**

- Staff from Toronto Shelter, and Support Services (TSSS) and representatives from The Neighborhood Group (TNG) joined the Working Group meeting to engage with members on the formation of a new Service User Advisory Group (SUAG).
- The engagement was in alignment with discussions from previous Working Group meetings ([HS9.5](#), [HS8.4](#)) to better understand the proposed governance framework and recruitment strategy for the SUAG.

### **• Presentation**

- Staff overviewed the recruitment strategy, proposed governance structure, and next steps to establish the SUAG.
- Staff shared that TNG was selected through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to operate the SUAG.
- Recruitment for the SUAG is intended to commence shortly, with the first iteration of the group being operational from July-December 2026.
- To make participation on SUAG as accessible as possible for its members, TSSS staff and TNG shared that:
  - The application process will be designed with consideration for varying levels of literacy among applicants Case management supports will also be provided, where support needs would be identified through the SUAG application and screening process;
  - Honoraria will be offered to SUAG members, as well as reimbursement for transit (e.g., bus fare);
  - Tablets may be offered to members, so they are able to join meetings virtually (if they are unable to join in person).
- The first month of the SUAG is intended to consist of training, facilitated by TNG, to build member capacity.

### **• Working Group Feedback**

- The SUAG should continue into 2027, (as the intended 6-month period for the SUAG seems like a short timeline for the SUAG to achieve its mandate).
  - Staff shared that it was likely that the SUAG could extend past the initial 6 months and will take this feedback into consideration of an extension.
- While the scope of input provided by SUAG will need to be applicable for shelter services, many women experiencing homelessness (sheltered and unsheltered) also have also experienced gender-based violence (GBV).

- Survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) who experience homelessness should be included as part of the targeted outreach for diverse representation on SUAG.
- The one-month training to build peer capacity may not be enough time to prepare members to be able to advocate and contribute feedback to highly complex and nuanced issues.
  - A longer training period with mentorship would help build capacity.
  - As part of recruitment, TSSS staff and TNG should consider recruiting peer program participants who have already undergone extensive training.
  - SUAG members should receive policy training and housing rights training to support them in their advisory function.
- SUAG members should have the capacity to set the agenda or table items for SUAG meetings.
  - TSSS staff and TNG should consider options to co-create a workplan with SUAG members so they can input on key priorities.
- The feedback structure and relationship between the SUAG, TNG, and TSSS should be formalized in its Terms of Reference.
  - In alignment with a human rights-based approach, SUAG members must understand how their input and participation will be considered and/or embedded into TSSS' work.
  - Consideration should also be placed on:
    - Whether TSSS staff should be present for some/all SUAG meetings;
    - What the feedback channels are between SUAG meetings and TSSS divisional work and priorities.
- Since SUAG members have likely experienced multiple traumas, it is important that the group be facilitated using a trauma-informed approach to ensure that service users feel validated and supported in their participation.

### **3. Consultation – Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union (TUHU)**

- The Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union (TUHU) joined the Working Group meeting to overview its key priorities and share current issues which require increased advocacy.
- TUHU overviewed the organization's history, mandate and key priorities.
- A key component of TUHU's mandate is to empower people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness to advocate for their needs and ensure accountability over the shelter system.
- A current area of concern for TUHU is related to displacement of people sleeping outdoors in anticipation of the FIFA World Cup and ongoing displacement at Union Station.
  - Displacement is not only deeply traumatizing, but it can disconnect people experiencing homelessness from their support networks, caseworkers, and access to vital services they rely on.

### **4. Next Steps**

- Following TUHU's presentation, Working Group members requested that TUHU provide its presentation to the full Committee at HRAC's upcoming meeting on May 29, 2026. This would align with, [HS10.5](#), which formally invited TUHU to provide a presentation at an HRAC meeting.

- In anticipation of the upcoming HRAC meeting on May 29, 2026, Working Group members are encouraged to consider: key priorities it would like the next term of HRAC (if restruck) to focus on, and successes and/or challenges they experienced during their time on the Committee.

Meeting ended at 4:30 pm.