



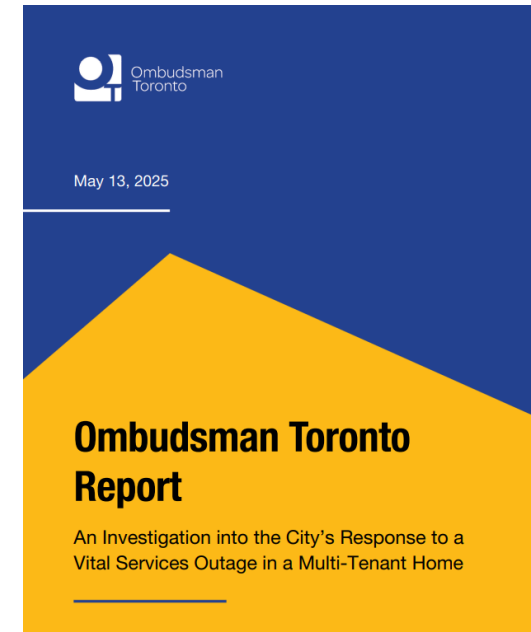
Status Update: Implementation of the Ombudsman's Recommendations on the City's Response to a Vital Services Outage in a Multi-Tenant Home

Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS), Housing Secretariat (HS), and Toronto Emergency Management (TEM)

Housing Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) – May 29, 2026

Purpose

To provide the Housing Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) with an update on progress made in response to Council direction and Ombudsman Toronto recommendations adopted through [2025.CC30.3](#)



Background

- In May 2025, Council adopted Ombudsman report recommendations ([2025.CC30.3](#)) on the City's response to a six-month vital services outage in a multi-tenant house
- The Ombudsman made **26 recommendations**, all accepted by the City, aimed at improving policies, procedures, and service standards, including for the Housing Secretariat's EPIC (Eviction Prevention in the Community) Program
- City Council provided an additional **6 directives** to staff related to the investigation
- In December 2025, staff provided a status update on the implementation of the recommendations and Council directives ([2025.EX28.2](#))

Role of City Divisions

Addressing vital services disruptions to prevent tenant displacement, and supporting those who become displaced, is a multi-divisional effort:

Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS)	Enforces bylaws that regulate the provision of vital services (heat, water, electricity) in rental units
Housing Secretariat (HS)	Administers the City's affordable and social housing systems and delivers tenant support programs, including EPIC
Toronto Emergency Management (TEM)	Administers short-term Emergency Social Services (ESS) to Toronto residents impacted by emergencies or by uninhabitable conditions caused by vital services disruptions
Other Divisions	Social Development oversees the STAR Table, in partnership with HS, that provides coordination of supports to vulnerable residents facing housing instability Toronto Building ensures compliance with the Ontario Building Code Toronto Fire Services enforces/inspects for fire safety issues as per the Fire Protection and Prevention Act Customer Experience Division provides intake via 311 and supports escalations to MLS

Previously Reported Actions: Ombudsman Recommendations and Council Directives (Q4 2025)

New Processes for Responding to Vital Services Requests

- Daily tracking and reporting of requests for service
- Stricter timelines for officers to respond
- New review processes for vital services files
- Enhanced management oversight through audits, dashboards, and performance tracking
- Improved 311 intake and escalation processes for service complaints

Improving Enforcement Staff Training

- Annual training on policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Mandatory vital services bylaw training
- Staff coaching and clearer expectations following the investigation

Revising Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Service Response

- Clearer investigation and communication protocols for service disruptions and utility shut-offs
- Remedial action identified as a last-resort enforcement tool, subject to enabling legislation and after other enforcement options are exhausted

EPIC Policies, Tenant Supports, and Reporting

- EPIC reviewing and updating policies, with input from the Ombudsman, to enhance clarity and transparency
- Tenant support work with WoodGreen documented
- Annual reporting on MTH enforcement actions to begin in 2026

Updates Since Q4 2025



Municipal Licensing and Standards

Service Request (SR) Tracking & Communication	• A new standalone SR (311) category for vital services to make it easier to file complaints • New outcome categories in back-end systems to better capture investigation results • Implemented “closed reason” updates and enhanced SR status communication
Oversight & Escalation Processes	• A formal escalation process for repeat SRs • New open Priority 1 and Priority 1 escalation reports • A daily missed service standard for vital service requests sent to managers
Operational Guidance & Procedural Updates	• Finalized review and revisions of SOPs with Ombudsman Toronto • Reviewed existing procedures regarding the filing of work orders for common area and in-unit violations

Housing Secretariat

Housing as a Human Right Training	• Procured an external consultant to develop and implement a housing as a human right training program for City staff. Training is in development and expected to begin rolling out in Q3 2026.
EPIC Service Policy Updates	• EPIC is reviewing and revising its policies, in consultation with the Ombudsman, to enhance clarity and transparency of its services (in progress)

Toronto Emergency Management

Webpage Updates	• Published information on its webpage about EPIC and its role in supporting tenants under TEM's emergency response protocol
Activation Protocol	• Established a formal ESS activation protocol with MLS in the event of a vital service outage that has rendered a home uninhabitable
Program Review and Policy Revision	• Undergoing a review of the Emergency Human Services Policy, which is being informed by findings from past responses, best practices in other jurisdictions, and consultation with emergency response partners (in progress) • Report to City Council tracking for Q1 2027 as directed by <u>MM39.37</u>, requesting to incorporate best practices on the coordination of City and community emergency supports (in progress)

Next Steps

- Finalize the remaining Ombudsman Toronto recommendations
- Continue working with Ombudsman Toronto as needed
- Continue interdivisional coordination to respond to complex rental housing issues

Appendix



Additional Background

Displacement in the Context of the Housing System

- The City of Toronto has a role in ensuring adequate and safe housing by enforcing by-laws that ensure landlords maintain safe, quality homes for renters.
- Preventing displacement is the best approach to support tenants and preserve affordable housing. It is also more cost-effective than providing alternative options to displaced tenants, such as emergency shelter.
- MTHs offer affordable housing for vulnerable groups, and once displaced tenants struggle to find similarly affordable options due to high market rents and inadequate social assistance rates
- Shelter system is over capacity, making it difficult for displaced tenants to find space, especially families or groups

Response to Ombudsman's Recommendations

Recommendation #	Division	Status	Details
1, 3, 5, 6, & 9	MLS	Completed	Updates to various Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)have been made
2	MLS	Completed	General Investigations SOP updated to include guidelines for when investigation results are communicated in writing
	MLS	Completed	Exploring options to send out templated responses to complainants about their service request and investigation results.
4, 7 & 8	MLS	Completed	Updates to various SOPs with a human right to housing lens have been made
10	MLS	Completed	Inclusion of a Vital Services (Priority 1) File Review Checklist in the Vital Services SOP Implementation of a Vital Services (Priority 1) File Review Checklist
11	MLS	Completed	Exploring opportunities for employing automatically generated reports (i.e., weekly exception reports) to be sent to Management on missed service levels (first contact/first attendance)

Recommendation #	Division	Status	Details
12	MLS	Completed	New SOP for Supervisors to Conduct Effective One-on-One Meetings with Officers, implementation of a new Work Audit Review Form, and a new dashboard to guide monthly check-ins between BEOs and Supervisors
13	MLS	Completed	Daily reports generated on Vital Services Service Requests, creation of a new Vital Services Training Module, and annual training for frontline staff and management on the Vital Services Bylaw
14	MLS	Completed	Review of MLS' SOP database to ensure BEOs can easily access SOPs and a new requirement for all BEOs to download the SOP application to their mobile device
15	MLS	Completed	Annual training for frontline staff and management on all relevant SOPs
16	MLS/HS	Completed	Annual training for frontline staff and management on the Toronto Housing Charter and the right to adequate housing – internal MLS training
	MLS/HS	Underway	Training is in development and expected to begin rolling out in Q3 2026.

Recommendation #	Division	Status	Details
17	HS	Underway	A policy document has been drafted outlining the services EPIC Program delivers through TEM emergency response protocol. Currently being reviewed for feedback by the Ombudsman's Office
18	HS	Underway	EPIC Program Model is being updated to include the services provided under TEM's emergency response protocol. Currently being reviewed by the Ombudsman's Office.
19	TEM/HS	Underway	TEM is conducting a full review of the Emergency Human Social Services (ESS) protocol – completion target date Q3 2026.
20	HS	Underway	Updates will be made to the City's website with information regarding EPIC's role in supporting tenants under TEM's ESS when it is complete.
21	HS	Underway	EPIC's policy framework is under development. Consultation with Ombudsman Toronto is underway.
22	HS	Underway	EPIC has established service standards for response times to service requests. Currently being reviewed by the Ombudsman's Office

Recommendation #	Division	Status	Details
23	HS	Underway	EPIC is developing guidelines on exercising discretion in the delivery of services, including requirements for documenting discretionary decisions, in consultation with Ombudsman Toronto.
24	HS	Underway	Vendor for housing as a human right training program procured and training program in development, to be rolled out to EPIC staff as a priority.
25	HS	Completed	Discussion of supports for multi-tenant home tenants in the event of unexpected closures is included in the report to Executive Committee on December 9, 2025.
26	HS	Completed	Discussion of updating or replacing the Rooming House Emergency Response Plan is included in the report to Executive Committee on December 9, 2025.
27	MLS/HS/T EM	Completed	Recommendation requests a status update to the Executive Committee on the implementation of all recommendations and quarterly thereafter, as well as a report to the Housing Rights Advisory Committee within a year on implementation.