

May 28, 2026

Housing Rights Advisory Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

HS11.1: Supporting Unhoused Rights Holders Working Group Update

Dear Housing Rights Advisory Committee Members,

I am writing as a member of the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG), established under TO Prosperity, the City of Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy. I appreciate the Committee's engagement with the Service User Advisory Group (SUAG) and offer the following reflections while the structure is still being developed. I am also providing a separate letter of support under HS11.2 in connection with the Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union's presentation.

I respectfully offer three observations for the Committee's consideration.

On scope. SUAG is currently scoped to shelter services. However, pre-shelter access, post-discharge supports under TSS Directive 2025-03, and homelessness prevention are all part of the same Toronto Shelter and Support Services continuum and do not occur in isolation. A narrowly defined scope may unintentionally limit what lived experience members are able to meaningfully speak to within the broader shelter and homelessness system.

On duration. LEAG was appointed in November 2025 and has spent its initial months establishing training, onboarding, and working relationships. The Working Group has already identified that six months may not be sufficient for SUAG. My own experience suggests similar concerns regarding continuity, institutional relationship-building, and the time required for meaningful participation and systems understanding to develop.

On structure. The May 7 Working Group minutes record that The Neighbourhood Group was selected by TSSS through an Expression of Interest process, and that recruitment, training, and honoraria administration will occur through TNG. The structure is described as "arm's length" and "third party." I raise this because operator-mediated structures can create distance between lived experience members and the systems they are intended to advise, which directly engages the Poverty Reduction principle of putting lived experience at the core of decision-making.

As a current LEAG member, my own experience reflects some of these dynamics. Initial training and onboarding were administered directly through the City of Toronto, while subsequent honoraria administration shifted through TNG. While I remain a City appointee, the operational relationship has evolved over time. I share this observation not as criticism of any individual organization, but because structural design choices influence how accountability, participation, and institutional proximity are experienced in practice.

I also wish to note that I support TUHU's position that the current shelter complaints process is not meaningfully accessible and is insufficiently independent. That position also reflects my own experience. Since November 2025, I have raised concerns with Homeless Initiatives and Prevention Services engaging issues under the Toronto Shelter Standards, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Despite multiple internal reviews, there has been no meaningful resolution.

The City's Human Rights Office has since advised that the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario remains the only remaining avenue available to address these concerns. When viewed through the Principles of Poverty Reduction, this raises broader questions regarding whether the proposed SUAG structure fully aligns with the City's stated commitments to lived experience leadership, accessibility, accountability, and meaningful participation.

I respectfully ask HRAC to consider these reflections before SUAG's Terms of Reference are finalized and recruitment opens, with the goal of ensuring that future members are entering a structure that genuinely reflects the principles under which they are being invited to serve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Rachel Waller (she/they)

Member, Lived Experience Advisory Group, TO Prosperity