

May 28, 2026

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

HS11.2: Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union Presentation

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, in support of the Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union's presentation to the Committee on May 29, 2026.

I understand TUHU will be raising concerns regarding the displacement and treatment of people experiencing homelessness at Union Station, alongside broader housing displacement and enforcement pressures emerging in advance of FIFA World Cup 2026. I write to put on the record that these same concerns were raised with the City weeks earlier through formal advisory and policy channels and have not received a substantive response.

On May 11, 2026, I wrote to Mayor Chow and Councillor Colle regarding enforcement-focused messaging distributed to approximately 300 condominium communities through Del Property Management Inc., which I suggested was inconsistent with the prevention-focused principles of SafeTO. On May 14, 2026, I wrote to Toronto Shelter and Support Services regarding FIFA-related housing displacement, gaps in homelessness prevention planning, and increasing pressure on unhoused residents and people in precarious housing situations.

These concerns directly engage both TO Prosperity and SafeTO. TO Prosperity identifies housing stability, accessibility, social inclusion, and coordinated systems responses as foundational to preventing marginalization and deepening poverty. SafeTO similarly positions community wellbeing, prevention, and social development as the first response to harm, with enforcement intended as the last.

With respect to Union Station, I do not believe it is credible to frame enforcement and displacement measures as unrelated to FIFA 2026. The tournament is, by the City's own characterization, a large-scale economic development and tourism initiative centered on the movement of people through Toronto's core infrastructure. Decisions to remove visibly marginalized residents from those spaces while restricting outreach access are inherently connected to FIFA-related operational priorities.

The same concern applies to housing displacement. International evidence from prior World Cups, including Qatar 2022, demonstrated that displacement and enforcement pressures emerge well before kickoff. These outcomes were foreseeable and should have informed homelessness prevention and anti-displacement planning well in advance.

I also do not believe responsibility should be placed primarily on short-term rental hosts responding rationally to years of public messaging surrounding FIFA-related tourism and economic opportunity. The City has maintained FIFA planning structures since 2023 and consistently framed the tournament as a major economic development initiative centered on tourism, travel, and hospitality. In that context, the resulting housing pressures cannot reasonably be treated as unexpected or disconnected from broader policy choices.

At the same time, significant human rights and anti-displacement planning appears to have lagged behind. I understand the City's FIFA 2026 Human Rights Action Plan is only expected to be released publicly next week, approximately one week before kickoff, despite equity, inclusion, diversity, anti-racism, and Indigenous participation having been identified as foundational pillars of the framework since the beginning of the planning process.

What is happening at Union Station is deeply concerning. If someone has never experienced not having anywhere to go, it can be difficult to understand the fear, instability, and loss of dignity that comes with that reality. I understand it because a violent Toronto Police Service wellness check led directly to my disability, my first experience of poverty and homelessness, and my current housing precarity.

TO Prosperity and SafeTO both recognize that poverty, trauma, housing instability, and exclusion require prevention-focused and community-based responses, not enforcement-first approaches. I will lose my temporary housing on May 31, 2026 due to FIFA-related Airbnb pricing increases, in the absence of meaningful homelessness prevention support.

The concerns now being raised publicly at Union Station, and by residents experiencing displacement linked to FIFA-related market pressures, were raised weeks earlier through the City's own advisory and accountability structures because these outcomes were foreseeable well in advance.

I respectfully support TUHU's presentation and its call for meaningful inclusion, accountability, and protection for unhoused residents in advance of FIFA 2026. The concerns being raised today are not theoretical future risks. They are already unfolding in real time across Toronto's shelter system, public spaces, and precarious housing market.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Rachel Waller (she/they)

Member, Lived Experience Advisory Group, TO Prosperity