

NOTICE OF MOTION

Enabling Shelter Allowance Savings for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Moved by: Councillor

Paul W. Ainslie

Neethan Shan

Seconded by: Councillor

SUMMARY:

This motion requests that the Province of Ontario amend Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rules to allow individuals without a fixed address to retain and save their shelter allowance, so it can be used to help secure housing.

Ontario continues to experience rising levels of homelessness, placing increasing pressure on shelters, hospitals, and other emergency services. Many individuals receiving Ontario Works or ODSP remain unable to transition into housing due to upfront costs such as first and last month's rent.

Under current rules, individuals without a fixed address are not eligible to receive the shelter portion of their social assistance benefits. As a result, they are unable to accumulate funds that could otherwise be used to secure housing. This creates a cycle in which individuals remain in shelters or temporary accommodations because they cannot save enough to move into stable housing.

Allowing individuals to retain and save their shelter allowance would remove a clear barrier to exiting homelessness. This change would enable people to build toward securing housing without requiring new funding, by making more effective use of existing supports.

Such a change would complement the City's ongoing investments in shelter services and housing programs by supporting more people to transition out of the shelter system and into stable housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City Council request the Province of Ontario to:
 - a. amend Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program rules to allow individuals experiencing homelessness to receive and accumulate the shelter portion of their benefits; and
 - b. establish a mechanism (such as a reserve or escrow account) that allows the portion of the benefits requested to be made available in Part 1.a. above to be held and used for first and last month's rent and other housing-related costs necessary to secure and stabilize housing (such as renter's insurance, key deposits, and essential move-in expenses) when housing is secured.
2. City Council direct the City Manager to communicate this request to the Province of Ontario as part of the City's ongoing advocacy on homelessness and housing stability.

Date: May 6, 2026