

May 15, 2026

Re: Support for Member Motion introduced by Deputy Mayor Paul Ainslie

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of Council,

I am writing to express my strong support for the member motion being introduced by Toronto Deputy Mayor Paul Ainslie urging the Province of Ontario to 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 toward securing housing.

Under current social assistance rules in Ontario, when recipients lose their housing, they also lose their shelter allowance (\$390 for Ontario Works and \$599 for ODSP), creating a significant barrier to securing new housing. The motion requests the Province of Ontario to establish a mechanism (such as a reserve or escrow account) that allows these funds to be held and used for first and last month's rent and other housing-related costs necessary to secure and stabilize housing when housing is secured.

With nearly 85,000 people experiencing homelessness across Ontario—and homelessness in Toronto more than doubling since 2021 to over 15,400 individuals—this targeted policy solution could support over 30,000 OW and ODSP recipients in regaining housing, while also reducing downstream costs to the healthcare and emergency shelter systems.

At CAMH, we know firsthand the importance of safe, stable housing for good physical and mental health. People experiencing homelessness have more visits to our emergency department than those who are housed, and we know through cross-country research that patients experiencing homelessness stay in hospital twice as long, with double the costs, compared with the national average. Providing individuals experiencing homelessness with the opportunity to save money for housing is a straightforward solution for a complex system problem that will greatly benefit many of the people we serve.

We commend the City of Toronto, and Deputy Mayor Ainslie in particular, for bringing forward this motion and demonstrating leadership, and we urge the City Council to adopt this motion.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to addressing homelessness and improving outcomes for people receiving social assistance so everyone can live with dignity.

Sincerely,



Sean A. Kidd, Ph.D., C.Psych.
Senior Scientist
Co-Director - Institute for Mental Health Policy Research