

Initiatives to Support 2SLGBTQ+ Communities Experiencing Homelessness

Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS)

May 13, 2026



OUR VISION

Toronto is a city where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring, and where people experiencing homelessness are supported using a Housing First approach.



OUR MISSION

As Toronto's shelter service system manager, we oversee and coordinate shelter, support services, and outreach to connect people experiencing homelessness with housing.

Homelessness Service System

- Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) ensures that people experiencing homelessness have access to emergency shelter and wrap-around supports, while assisting them to develop permanent housing plans.
- We directly operate and fund community agencies that deliver:
 - Emergency shelter and support programs
 - Street outreach
 - 24-hour respite and drop-in programs

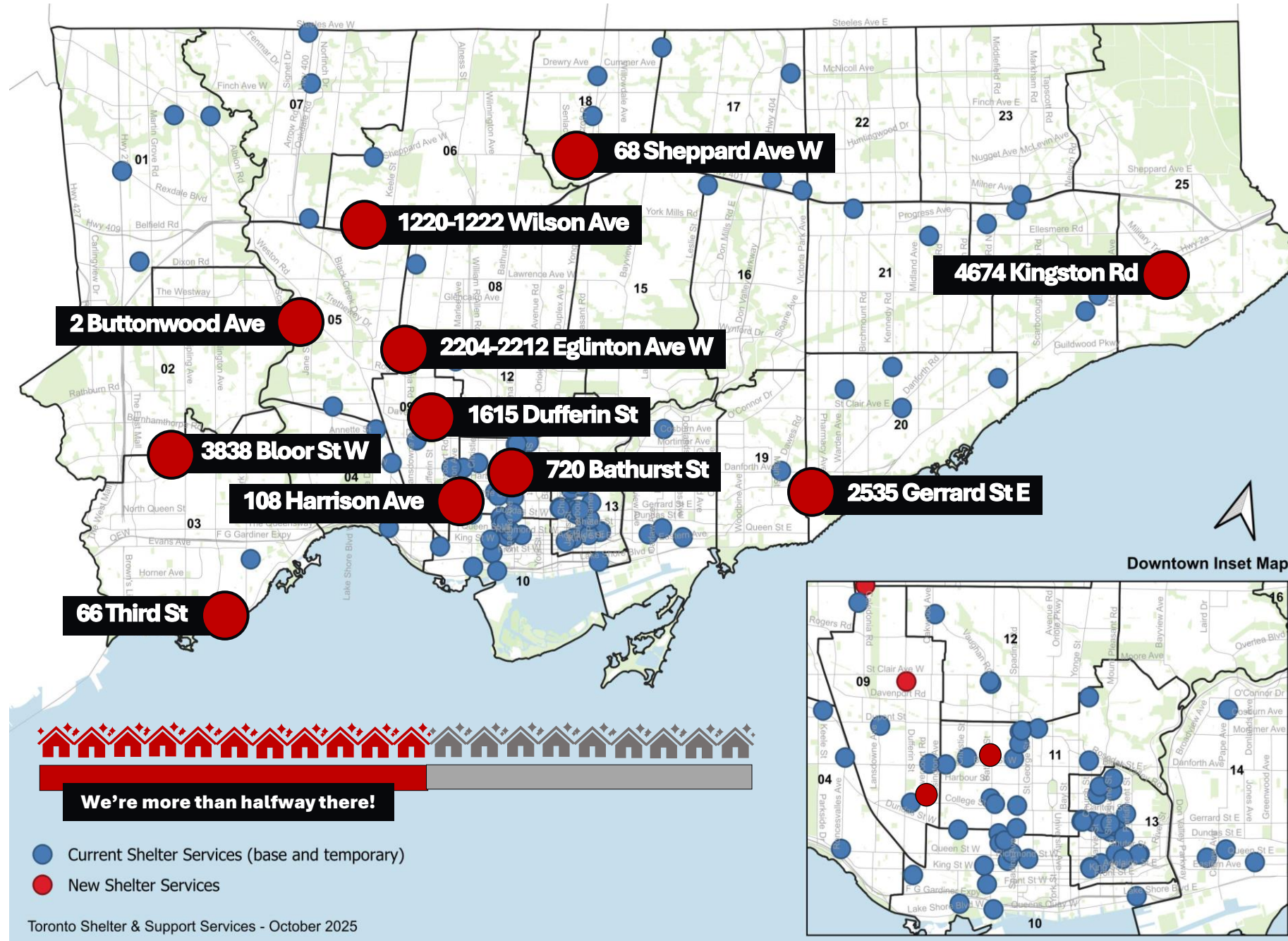
New HSCIS Shelters

Through the HSCIS, the City will develop **1600 spaces or up to 20 new shelters sites.**

In the last year, **11 new shelter locations** have been announced across the City.

This accounts for **approx. 1060beds or 66% of the new beds** that will be developed!

Focus in 2026 will be on advancing design and construction on these first 11 sites.

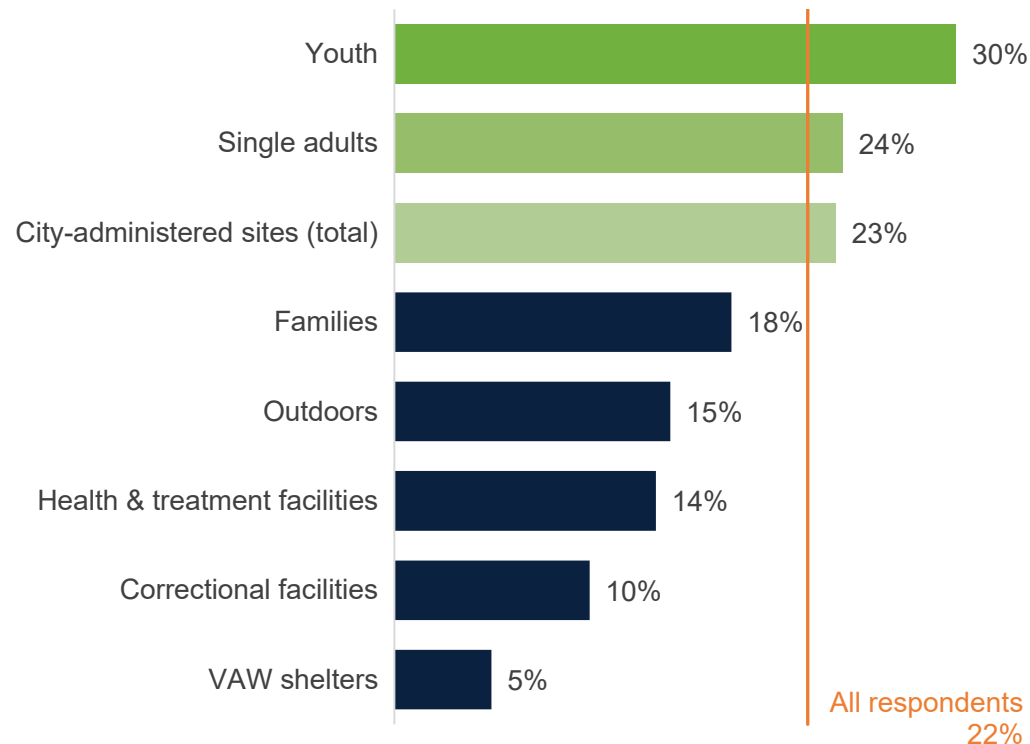




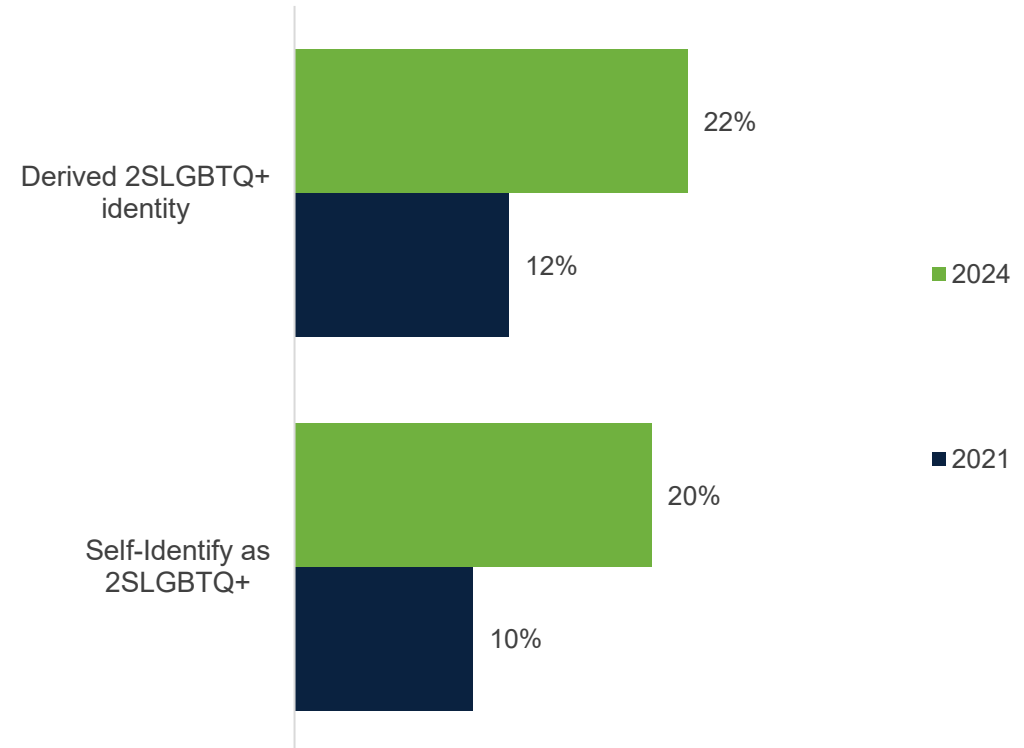
Initiatives to support 2SLGBTQ+ experiencing homelessness

The proportion of respondents who identified as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community has doubled since 2021

Respondents Identifying as 2SLGBTQ+ by Surveyed Group

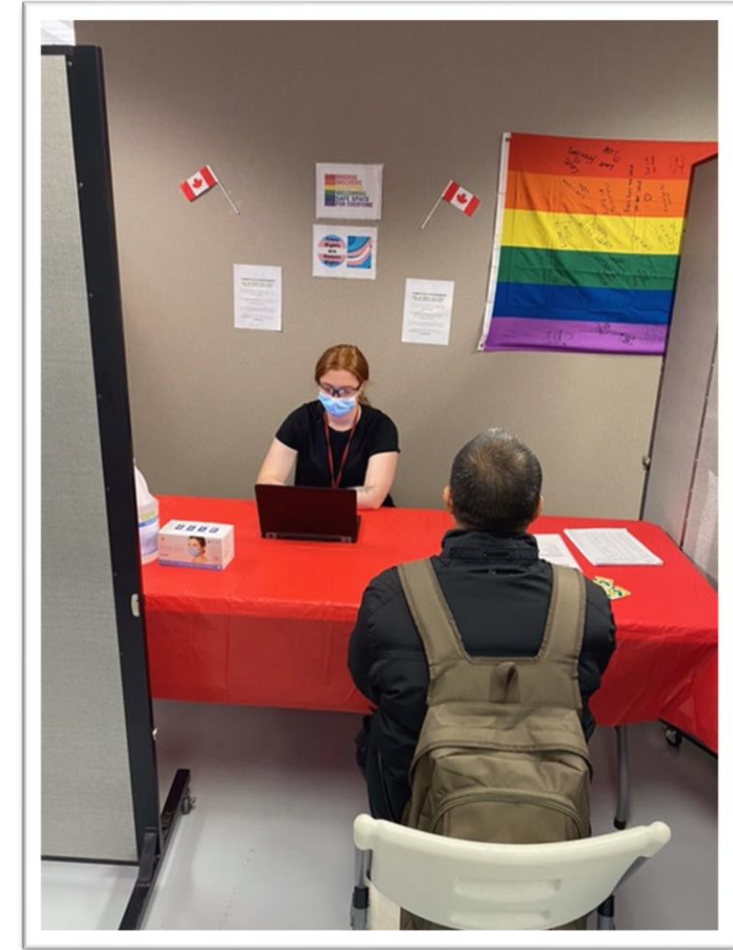


Respondents Identifying as 2SLGBTQ+



Implementing a 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusive Street Needs Assessment

- Ongoing collaboration with Dr. Alex Abramovich to implement an inclusive SNA:
 - Gender identity and sexual identity questions with a diverse and inclusive range of options included on the SNA survey
 - Training provided to staff conducting surveys on creating a 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive SNA
- TSSS is currently in partnership with Dr. Abramovich, who will conduct a deeper analysis of 2024 SNA data.
- Findings will be published in a joint research manuscript, which will include reporting and contextualization of gender identity, sexual identity and 2SLGBTQ+ questions for the 2024 SNA



How 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusive Data informs Service Delivery

Street Needs Assessment data, which showed an over-representation of 2SLGBTQ+ in the emergency shelter system, continues to inform TSSS service delivery:



2SLGBTQ+ cultural competency training made mandatory for all shelter staff, including maintenance, facilities, hospitality, and management staff



In 2025, the Toronto Shelter Standards (TSS) and the 24-hr Respite Site Standards (TRS) were updated to better support 2SLGBTQ+ clients and to address systemic barriers

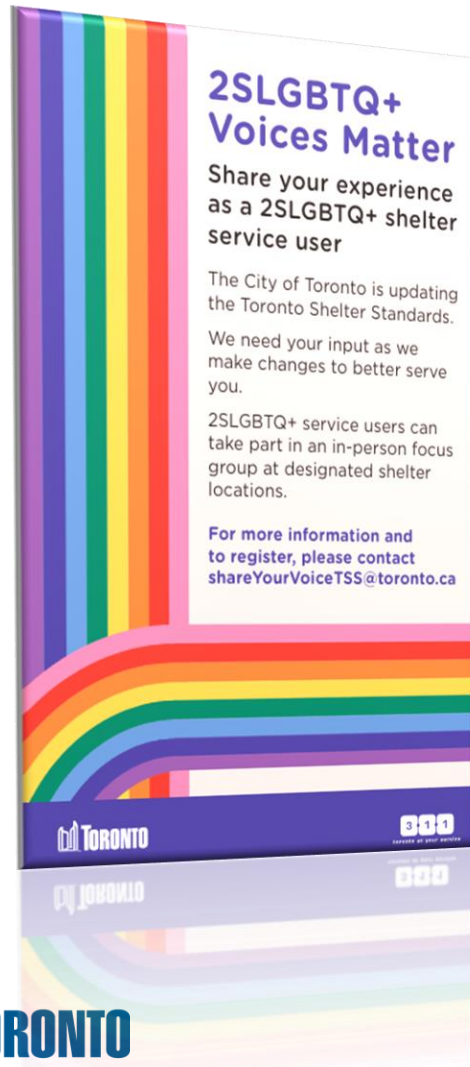


SNA results will be a direct input into the next Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness



Regularly inform service delivery and policy development, such as the housing targets for the Priority Access to Housing and Supports (PATHS) and the Rapid Rehousing Initiative (RRHI)

Updating Toronto Shelter Standards for 2SLGBTQ+ clients



- In alignment with the Division's [Homelessness Solutions Service Plan](#), the City updated the Toronto Shelter Standards (TSS) and 24-Hour Respite Site Standards (TRS) to better support 2SLGBTQ+ clients, with a focus on trans and non-binary individuals.
- In 2024, consultations with shelter staff and 2SLGBTQ+ clients informed these updates.
- Over 70 staff participated in five virtual sessions.
- 64 clients shared their experiences, including through dedicated 2-Spirit and trans-only engagement sessions.

Updating Toronto Shelter Standards for 2SLGBTBQ+ clients

- Standards to improve the experience of 2SLGBTQ+ have been added to the TSS in the following areas:
 - Capacity building
 - Policy development
 - Basic needs
 - Creating safer spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ clients
 - Client-focused 2SLGBTQ+ resources and supports
 - Collaboration with community partners
- These changes were outlined in [TSSS Directive 2025-02](#) that was launched in December of 2025.

TORONTO SHELTER and SUPPORT SERVICES

DIRECTIVE

Directive No.: 2025-02
Date Issued: December 16, 2025

Authority

This Directive is issued under the authority of the General Manager of Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS).

Subject

Amendments to Standards in the [Toronto Shelter Standards](#) to better support clients who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer plus).

Purpose of Directive

Direction on updates to the Toronto Shelter Standards (TSS) to enhance equity and help address systemic barriers related to discrimination through new shelter standards that better support 2SLGBTQ+ clients.

Directive or Required Action

Key Updates

1. *Section 10.3.3 2SLGBTQ+ clients* has been updated and revised to reflect specialized program requirements specific to serving 2SLGBTQ+ clients. This section appears under *Section 10, Management, Supports and Services*.
 - All standards that previously referenced transgender clients have been revised to state "gender diverse, transgender and Two-Spirit clients"
2. Standards to improve the experience of 2SLGBTQ+ have been added to the TSS in the following areas:
 - Capacity building
 - Policy development
 - Basic needs
 - Creating safer spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ clients
 - Client-focused 2SLGBTQ+ resources and supports
 - Collaboration with community partners

All new standards are preceded by an asterisk (*).

3. Certain existing standards have been revised to improve understandings around equity, diversity, inclusion and awareness. These revisions appear in **bold text** throughout this Directive.

Key Opportunities: Service User Advisory Group

- TSSS is establishing a Service User Advisory Group (SUAG) made up of people staying in shelters or experiencing homelessness.
- The SUAG will provide input to improve service delivery, policy, and program development.
- Toronto Neighbourhood Group was selected in Q4 2025 to operate the SUAG.
- Membership will reflect Toronto's shelter population, with strong 2SLGBTQ+ representation.
- The SUAG will help inform policies to improve experiences for 2SLGBTQ+ clients in the shelter system.



Partnerships: The 519

SECTOR TRAINING

“expertise, compassion, and professionalism ...valuable information... real and relatable”

2SLGBTQIA Sexual Orientation Queer Reclaimed term	Best Practices Ask and share pronouns regularly Don't make assumptions You can't guess a person's pronouns by looking at them Use current language to refer to a person in past, present and future Appearance ≠ Pronouns Using people's chosen language is affirming and respectful	Intersectionality Microaggressions: - Wear a person down - Make people feel suspicious of others - Heightens fear around personal safety - Hinders connection	Elements of Transition You can only know a person is Trans if they tell you they are Trans	Making Mistakes Repairing relationships - Recognize & name reactions to harm caused - Re-affirm commitment to inclusive space - One-to-one conversation - Acknowledge hurt and harm of situation
Meeting 2 Spirit Needs Cultural needs can be: - Access to medicines - Access to traditional counselling - Access to community	A Different Perspective Using substances is often a coping mechanism	Newcomer and Refugee Realities Steps to Stay in Canada: 1-1.5+ years wait for a hearing date - Hope for a successful hearing - Few month wait for Notice of Decision 1-1.5+ year wait for Permanent Residency 3 year wait for Citizenship test 5-6 year long wait total	Common Experiences 2SLGBTQIA refugees are at high risk for experiencing domestic violence and abuse	Ideas to Consider Being a support person in a sea of chaos can truly change someone's life

SECTOR TRAINING

DETAILS

Asynchronous learning + facilitated sessions

Funded by TSSS - mandated for city shelter staff

- 12 519 Staff
- 2 Community Members
- 3 Collaborators from other agencies

STATS

11 asynchronous modules

2 live facilitated discussions

1,500+ staff trained

14 agencies served

10,000 training hours

FEEDBACK

Would recommend



Equipped to support 2SLGBTQ+ community



SECTOR TRAINING

SCENARIOS



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

- Create consistent and dignified service delivery for 2SLGBTQ+ shelter residents across the city
- Opportunities to approach, reflect on and implement the Toronto Shelter Standards 2SLGBTQ+ updates
- Support shelter standard compliance in both policy and practice
- Provide tangible and practical supports to prepare for 2026/27 Quality Assurance process
- Participation from Senior Leadership, not tokenized 2SLGBTQ+ staff

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Cultivating Safe Environments for 2SLGBTQ+ Shelter Residents

- Inclusive Programming
- Inclusive Intake, Orientation & Communications
- 2SLGBTQ+ Health Supports
- Discharge Planning Considerations

2SLGBTQ+ Policy Review, Development and Alignment

- Policy for Trans inclusion
- 2SLGBTQ+ Complaints process and confidentiality
- 2SLGBTQ+ Safety Planning

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:



TORONTO
DROP-IN
NETWORK



pacewood
LGBTQ+ Newcomers Shelter



DIXON HALL



eva



In collaboration with: Toronto Shelter & Support Services

Where We Belong: Housing Rights and Recommendations for 2SLGBTQ+ People



THE 519

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EXCERPT FROM THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is also clear that an urgent and large-scale response is required to address these issues and ensure the long-term stability of 2SLGBTQ+ people of all ages and demographics, to support our health, happiness and full participation.

- We need shelter, housing and housing supports developed by 2SLGBTQ+ people for 2SLGBTQ+ people, at a scale that proportionally reflects the size of our community and its overrepresentation in experiences of being unhoused and precariously housed.
- We need 2SLGBTQ+ people at housing decision-making tables.
- We need a housing system that elevates the right to housing over the financialization of housing, through protecting renter rights and investing in deeply affordable and accessible housing.

2SLGBTQ+ people simply want what all people desire – safe, adequate and affordable housing: a comfortable place to call home.



Discussion

Discussion and Questions

- Based on the updates shared today, did this work resonate, and are there any areas you would recommend we focus on more closely?
- Are there any opportunities of connection and learning TSSS can draw from across other City initiatives to support 2SLGBTQ+ populations?

Thank You

