

# Toronto Shelter and Support Services

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

# Land Acknowledgement for Toronto



We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.



## General Manager's Message



2024 was a busy year, as we responded to ongoing, high demand for services. Together, we provided emergency support to more than 24,200 unique individuals, helping them to know that their lives matter.

We undertook critically important initiatives in 2024 to strengthen and underpin our work. This included the launch of our Interdivisional Protocol for Encampments, which is rooted in a human-rights based approach that recognizes the need for shelter, housing, safety and dignity.

We completed our 2024 Street Needs Assessment, surveying the largest number of people to date, and launched our Shelter Safety Action Plan, outlining measures we will prioritize over the next three years to support staff and clients.

Work to stabilize our shelter system also continued in 2024, as we secured the first six shelter sites to be developed under the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy and worked with partners to open new refugee houses, offering specialized services to help refugee claimants build a new life in Canada.

These items are just a few of the critically important initiatives we undertook in 2024, captured in these pages.

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by one thing – and that is the power of partnership, collaboration and community. The work that we do at Toronto Shelter and Support Services would not be possible without the support of staff and partners from across the homelessness services sector.

I am incredibly proud of this work and thank you for your support. So much of what we do is possible because of you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Tanner".

Gord Tanner,  
General Manager  
Toronto Shelter & Support Services (TSSS)

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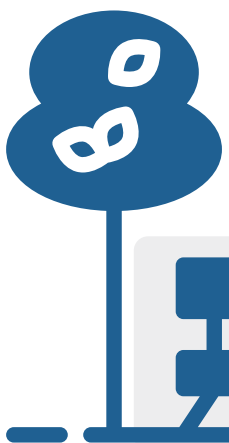
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# 2024 Accomplishments



Provided overnight accommodations to more than **24,200** individuals, including more than **12,600** refugee claimants



Assisted more than **4,300** people to move into permanent housing



Conducted close to **25,000** street outreach visits

Announced six new shelters to be developed under the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy



Launched the **Shelter Safety Action Plan** to help improve shelter system safety



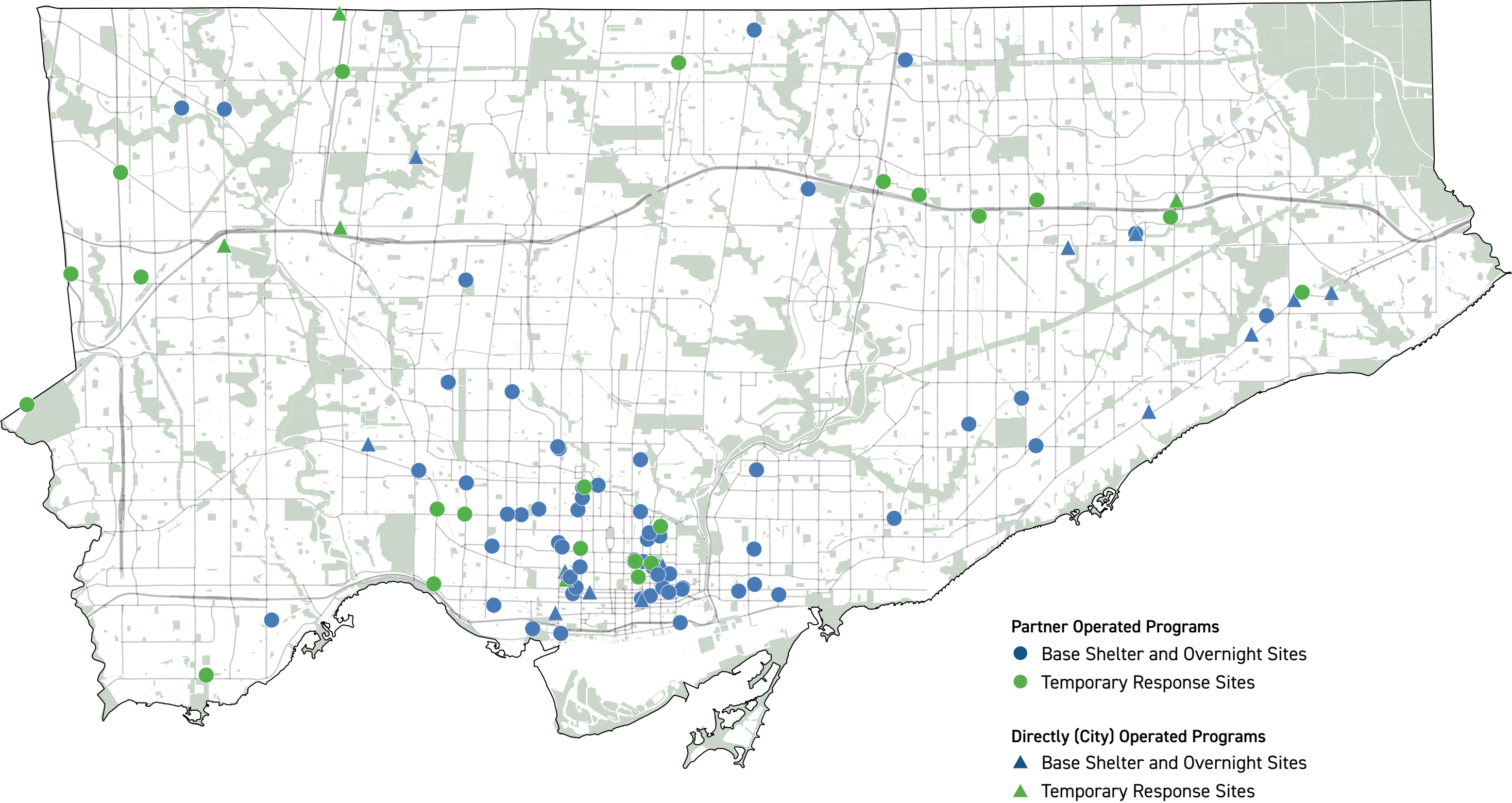
Conducted the 2024 Street Needs Assessment, a point-in-time count and survey of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto

Answered more than **323,000** calls at Central Intake, providing homelessness services information and support





# Map of Shelter Services





## African Ancestral Acknowledgement

The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

This painting was created by Carol Mc Donald, Manager, Women's Residence, to commemorate TSSS' Divisional Mentorship Program for Black Staff.

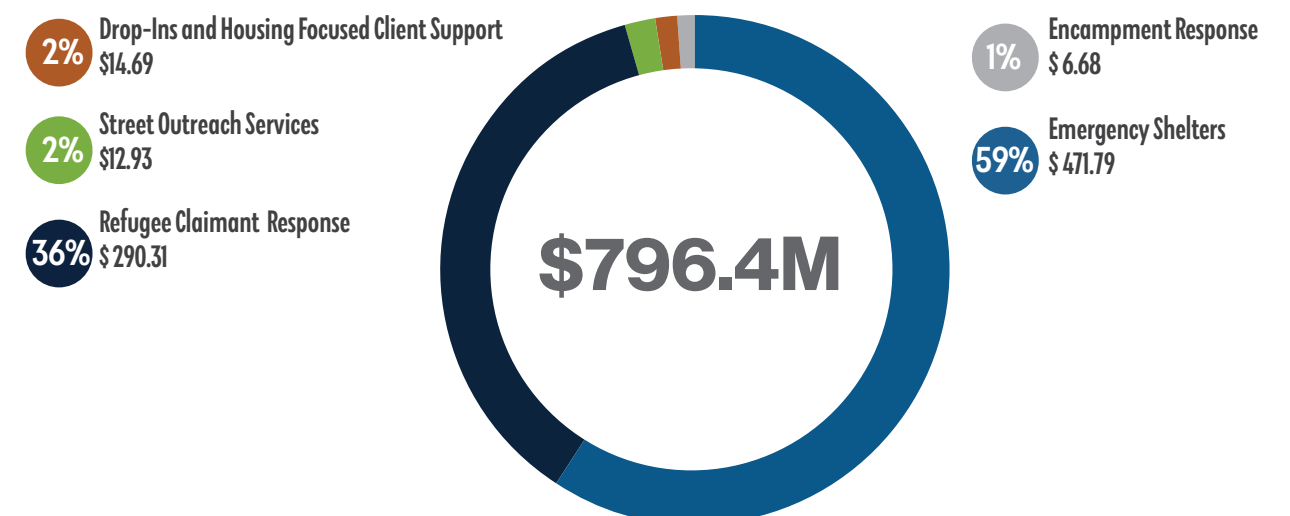
# Financial Highlights

We continue to receive funding from the City's tax base, as well as Federal and Provincial Subsidies to help us deliver our important programs. In 2024, we received \$796.40 million in operating funds. This money was used to operate emergency shelter services; lead our refugee, street outreach and encampment responses; and provide grants to community organizations that operate daytime drop-in programs and provide client focused supports.

### Where the money came from (in millions)



### Where the money went (in millions)





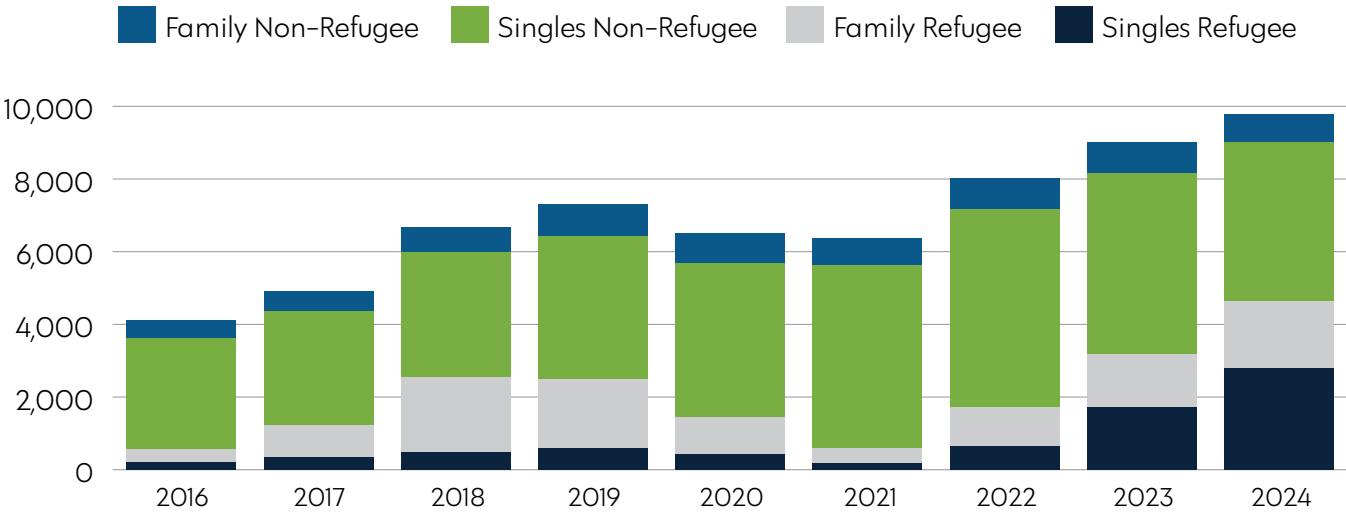
# What is Driving Shelter System Demand?

We continued to respond to significant demand for shelter in 2024, providing accommodations to an average of 9,700 people each night. This compares to just 4,100 people in 2016, which is when demand began to significantly increase.

Around the same time, we began to track the number of people in the shelter system experiencing chronic homelessness, which has continued to grow. This is a direct result of the housing and affordability crises, and income supports that haven't kept pace with the rising cost of living, making it difficult for people to exit the shelter system. This impact means that a shelter bed in 2024 served half as many people as it did in 2018. During this time, the need for mental health and harm reduction supports has also grown.

We continue to use data to guide investments in the City's shelter system and our advocacy efforts.

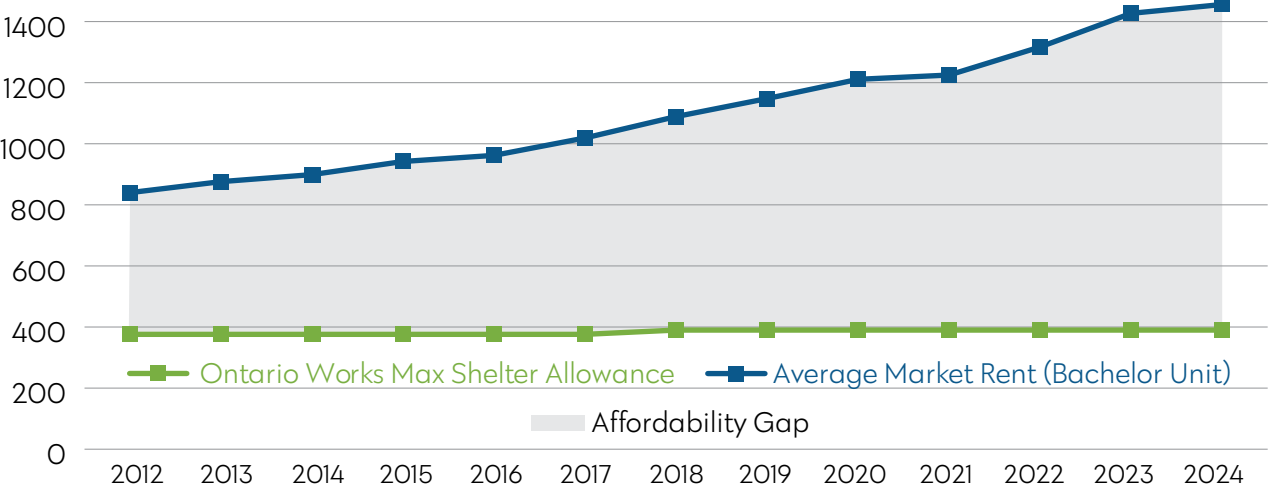
Average annual occupancy, by sector and status



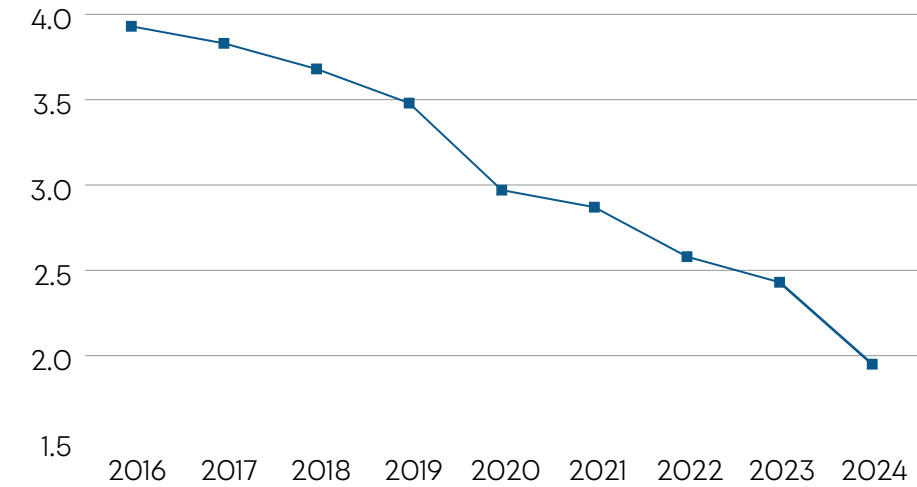
\*Chronic homelessness: An individual who has recorded a minimum of 180 overnight stays in the past year (365 days) or has recurrent overnight stays over the past three years with a cumulative duration of at least 546 nights.

## The affordability gap is growing in Toronto:

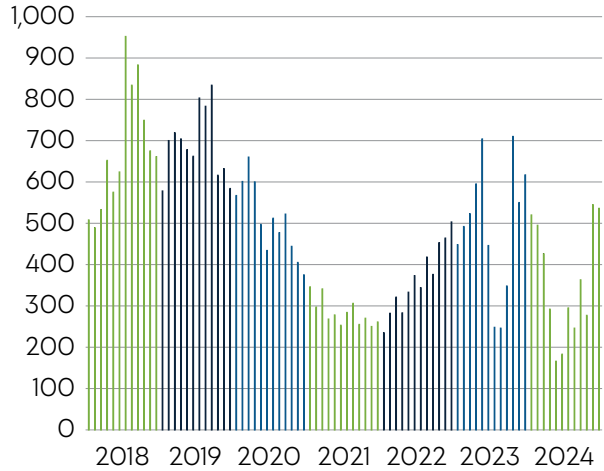
Average monthly rent for a bachelor unit is \$1,066 higher than the maximum housing allowance for a single individual on Ontario Works benefits.



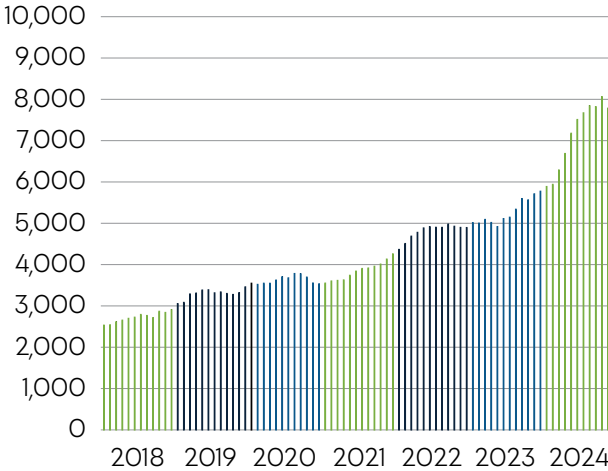
## A shelter bed in Toronto served half as many people in 2024 as it did in 2018



## People moved to permanent housing



## Chronically homeless



# Who We Support

## Amando

For Armando, a senior living on the street, every day was a battle. He struggled – not knowing where his next meal would come from, searching for a warm, safe place to rest, and protecting himself from extreme weather and hostile strangers.

During this time, Armando received support from FOCUS (Furthering our Communities by Uniting Services) an innovative initiative co-led by the City, United Way Toronto and Toronto Police Services that aims to reduce risk, harm, crime and victimization, and improve community resiliency and well-being.

Through FOCUS, Armando was connected to Streets to Homes who helped him to collect the documents required for housing. When a seniors unit became available through the City's Rapid Rehousing Initiative, Armando accepted without hesitation.

Today, Armando says he drinks his morning coffee while listening to music. He enjoys the view from his apartment furnished with items from the Furniture Bank and looks forward to decorating his balcony with flowers this summer.

“You saved my life.  
Thank you so much  
for this.”

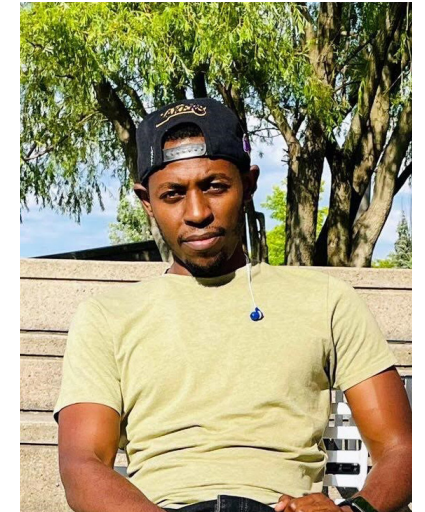
## Firew

Firew fled a dangerous situation in his home country and came to Canada with the hope of safety and security. Upon arrival, he found himself “on a foreign land, without a home and nowhere to go.”

“I had to sleep on the street before I found a temporary shelter,” explains Firew. It was at a Toronto shelter where he received the support he says saved him from “the mental and physical distress that comes from homelessness.”

Firew continues, “The support I received transcended mere housing assistance. It provided me with the information and knowledge necessary to establish myself in Ontario, build a fulfilling life and become an active member of the community.”

“The impact of your service on my life has been immeasurable. Thank you for everything you’ve done for me and countless others like me. Your service is a true testament to the welcoming and compassionate nature of the Canadian people.”



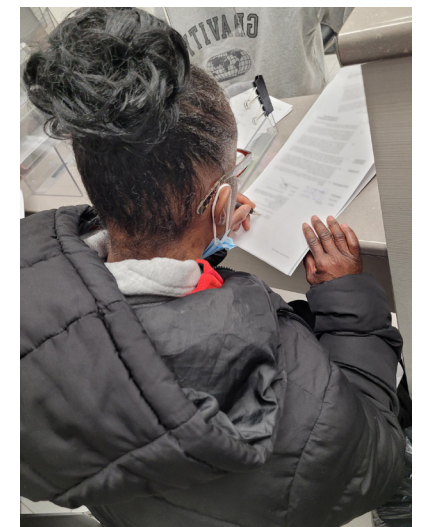
## Mary Jane

Mary Jane became homeless when the person she was renting a room from was given an eviction notice. Even though she was paying her share, she was forced to leave and ended up staying in shopping malls and coffee shops.

Mary Jane went to a nearby shelter who referred her to the City's Streets to Homes Assessment & Referral Centre. She says, “I’d never heard of the place before but the most important thing at that time was that I was going to be in a warm place – and it was!”

It was there that Mary Jane got the support she needed to get into permanent housing. She says, “This experience, for me, was life-changing in a good way. Because at the end of it, I met a housing worker named Annmarie.”

Mary Jane continues, “Homelessness can bring happiness if you have the right people to guide you and help through the process. I am thankful to my counsellor and all the staff for helping me through this difficult time.”





# Equity and Inclusion

## Improving 2SLGBTQ+ Shelter Standards

In alignment with our Division's Homelessness Solutions Service Plan, Action 2, which focuses on equity, work began in 2024 to update the Toronto Shelter Standards (TSS) and the 24-Hour Respite Site Standards (TRS) to better support 2SLGBTQ+ people staying in City-funded shelters and respite sites, with a particular focus on people who are trans and non-binary.

To inform this work, the Quality Assurance team organized engagement sessions for 2SLGBTQ+ clients and shelter staff.

Feedback from 64 service users who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ was collected through:

- Seven focus groups held at shelter sites across all sectors, facilitated by a consultant who identifies as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- Six one-on-one interviews held over a 2-day drop-in session at The 519
- A focus group dedicated to 2-Spirit clients held at the University of Toronto's Teaching Lodge (St. George campus), and organized in partnership with the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

We also held a series of virtual engagement sessions, involving more than 70 staff, who shared their feedback on how to better support this client group.

Draft standards are in development and will be implemented in partnership with the sector.

### City Manager's Award of Excellence!

In 2024, we were thrilled to win the City Manager's Award of Excellence in the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion category for our Divisional Mentorship Program for Black staff. The program, which started in 2021, matches Black staff with mentors, helping them to build connections, gain exposure to other roles, and build professional and leadership skills. In 2024, the program welcomed 109 participants from across our division and Toronto Employment and Social Services.

## Confronting Anti-Black Racism

With leadership from our Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) team, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering equity within the division by advancing initiatives to support Black staff and clients. In 2024, this was accomplished through strengthening existing partnerships, cultivating new relationships, and intensifying our efforts to challenge anti-Black racism within the sector.

2024 highlights include:

- Holding consultations with community partners to inform an Expression of Interest to secure a Black-mandated organization to run a Black-mandated shelter. This shelter will be developed through the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy.
- Partnering with the Toronto Hostels Training Centres and community organizations to develop a training program for the sector, focused on educating staff about the relationship between the impacts of anti-Black racism and mental health.
- Supporting the implementation of Toronto Shelter Standards related to Confronting Anti-Black Racism by developing program and policy resources to assist the sector with implementation.
- Continuing to lead the sector-wide CABR Knowledge Exchange Table, where staff and service providers can share best practices and strategies to better support Black clients and staff.







## Advancing Reconciliation

In January 2025, we gathered with our Indigenous partners to celebrate six years of our Meeting in the Middle Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. We also used the opportunity to reflect on our commitments and the progress made in 2024 to address Indigenous homelessness in Toronto. This included:

- Developing a process and launching an Expression of Interest aimed at securing operators for four new Indigenous shelters to open under the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS), including one for Indigenous women. Under HSCIS, 20% of funding for new shelters will be earmarked to support and address Indigenous homelessness.
- Continuing to collaborate with the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) on policy and strategic initiatives, such as:
  - Work with Indigenous consulting company Nibisiing Consulting to co-create a culturally safe process to seek feedback from Indigenous people with lived experiences, service providers, and partners, to inform the City's Interdivisional Protocol for Encampments.
  - Ensuring our Behavioural Risk Alert Safety System launched in May 2024 meets and addresses Indigenous needs.
  - Identifying recommendations, culturally appropriate services and relevant outcomes for Indigenous shelter users to support the Auditor General's recommendations to improve case management.
  - Planning and implementing the City's Street Needs Assessment.
- Working with the Housing Secretariat, TICAB, and the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle to allocate \$8.67 million (20% of grant funding) to Indigenous organizations providing housing and homelessness services.
- Continuing to prioritize a minimum of 25% of all social and supportive housing units to Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness, helping 176 households to become stably housed.





# Responding to Demand for Shelter and Support

## Refugee Claimant Response

In 2024, the demand for emergency shelter services from refugee claimants continued to grow, with numbers reaching unprecedented levels. With the system accommodating approximately 10,000 people nightly, more than half were refugees.

As part of our efforts to increase capacity, create efficiencies, and enhance supports for refugee populations, we collaborated with refugee-serving organizations to introduce the “Refugee House Model” to the shelter system. Recognized as a best practice for welcoming refugees, we opened four new sites, adding close to 200 new spaces. Under this service model, refugee clients receive specialized services tailored to meet their unique needs, resulting in better outcomes.

Through investments in diversion programs, we successfully diverted 1,600 refugees from the shelter system and facilitated the transfer of 4,433 eligible refugee claimants to hotels run by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), located outside of Toronto. In 2025, we will build on these innovative and sustainable approaches, ensuring refugees continue to be welcomed in a dignified way.

Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen our collaborative and bilateral relationships with the federal government, provincial ministries, municipalities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, and community organizations. This includes co-chairing a tri-level intergovernmental table with IRCC and participating in various committees and tables. These efforts were pivotal in advocating for additional Canada–Ontario Housing Benefits, consistent federal funding and a coordinated national response to large-scale refugee arrivals.



Other 2024 highlights include:

- Supporting Peel Region in the planning and development of a Regional Reception Centre.
- Increasing the number of refugee-specific shelter programs to 24 programs, operated by 11 service providers, serving nearly 3,000 clients.
- Facilitating \$4.3 million in Council-approved compensation to community organizations and churches engaged in sheltering refugee claimants.
- Collaborating with Municipal Licensing & Standards to establish guidance for Refugee Houses under the Multi-Tenant Housing Framework.





## Winter Services Plan

Supporting people experiencing homelessness during the cold weather, when health and safety risk are higher, remains a priority for us. In the first quarter of 2024, working with our partners, we continued to offer dedicated winter spaces to help get as many people inside as possible.

This work continued in the fall, with the start of our 2024/2025 winter season. This past year's Winter Services Plan offered more spaces and services than ever before, including:

- 530 spaces through expanded shelter programs and dedicated 24-hour respite sites
- 265 spaces at five Warming Centres activated when temperatures reach minus five degrees Celsius or during winter weather event warnings
- 173 additional surge spaces when temperatures hit -15 degrees, including two more Warming Centres, along with enhanced street outreach
- An additional 200 hours weekly at daytime drop-in programs with extended hours
- More than 350 supportive and social housing units that became available over the winter months

This work would not have been possible without the support of staff from our division and partners from across the homelessness services sector.

## Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy

We continued to advance our 10-year Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) in 2024, working with partners in Corporate Real Estate Management and CreateTO to assess more than 100 properties for shelter use. Following an extensive due diligence exercise that included an assessment of each lot, proximity to transit and services, environmental considerations, costs, zoning and other regulatory requirements, we were able to identify and announce six locations that are suitable for shelter use. These locations are the first six of up to 20 new shelters to be developed by 2033.

The shelters, which will be smaller, will be purpose-built to be more responsive to the needs of people staying in them and better integrate into surrounding communities. The new shelters will also allow the City to save money by moving out of more costly shelter hotels. New sites will be focused outside of the downtown core to address service gaps.

A portion of the up to 20 new HSICS sites will be dedicated to areas with significant need, such as family, youth, Black-led and Indigenous focus programs. Expressions of Interest to secure operators for the first six sites, including a dedicated call for Indigenous operators were launched in 2024. We expect to announce the successful proponents in 2025.

More information on the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy can be found on the City's website at [toronto.ca/newshelters](https://toronto.ca/newshelters).



# Street Outreach and Encampment Support

Work to connect those living outside with shelter, housing and support services continued in 2024, through our street outreach program and encampment support, which is led by our division, working collaboratively with staff from across the City of Toronto and partner agencies.

A significant milestone was the launch of the Interdivisional Protocol for Encampments in Toronto (IDP), which was adopted by City Council in June 2024. The IDP responds to the Ombudsman Toronto’s recommendations by outlining a strategic, coordinated and human-rights based approach to help people in encampments access shelter and/or housing while working to remove waste and debris and ensure parks and other shared-use spaces are accessible to all.

One pillar of the IDP is the Enhanced Outreach Model, which brings comprehensive social and health services supports directly to priority locations. Through this work, in 2024, staff worked to resolve long-standing encampment at Allan Gardens and Clarence Square without the use of enforcement. Enhanced outreach also began at Bellevue Square Park and Little Norway Park.

Our partnership with the TTC also continued in 2024 with dedicated street outreach staff working to support people in need across the transit system, focusing on hotspots. As part of this work, staff helped to connect people needing enhanced health and mental-health focused services to LOFT’s Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (M-DOT), which includes case managers and health care professionals, including nurses. Streets to Homes outreach staff also worked to refer individuals experiencing homelessness using the transit system into a shelter space.

2024 Results:





# Housing Outcomes

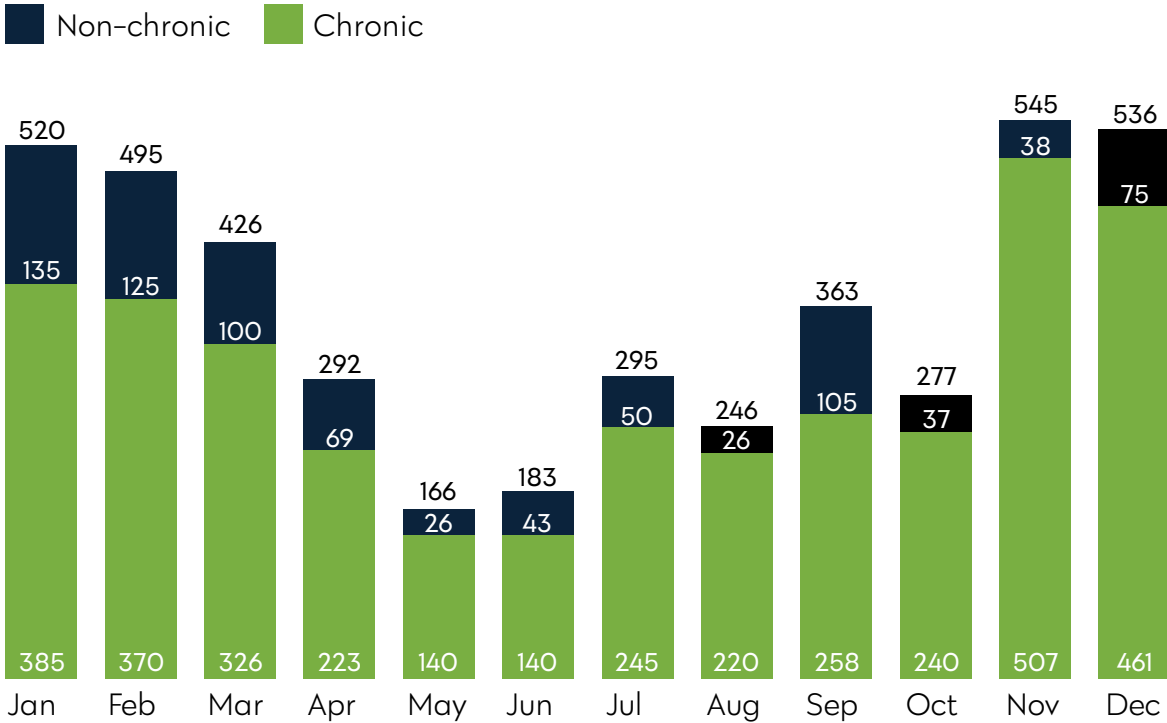
Supporting individuals experiencing homelessness to work towards permanent housing is an all-systems approach that remains at the forefront of our work.

To foster ongoing collaboration and service connections, in 2024, we continued to:

- hold monthly Housing Outcome Sessions, where Case Managers and housing staff could learn about best practices and housing resources to support clients
- work with Canada Revenue Agency and Service Canada to hold ongoing tax and ID clinics to help clients meet housing application requirements
- distribute quarterly housing outcome reports for all clients, as well as length of stay reports for families experiencing chronic homelessness, to help staff and partner agencies better understand housing readiness and outstanding needs

Through this work, in 2024, more than 4,300 people moved from the shelter system into permanent housing.

**People moved from Shelter to permanent housing in 2024, by chronicity of homelessness**



The Canada–Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), a portable monthly benefit to help households secure private market housing, remained an important tool in helping the people we serve to exit the shelter system. In 2024, there was a gap in COHB funding between April and October, which negatively impacted housing outcomes.

Staff and partners continued to work with the Housing Secretariat to move clients into new social and supportive housing units.

In 2024, 407 people (316 households) moved into rent-geared-to-income Toronto Community/Senior Housing Corporation units with at least 12 months of follow-up support, through the Rapid Rehousing Program. All units came fully furnished thanks to a partnership with the Furniture Bank. A further 470 people (441 households) moved into supportive housing units with supports.

Follow-up supports provide necessary and important services to help individuals transition from homelessness into permanent housing. In partnership with the Housing Secretariat, we referred a total of 844 people to receive follow-up case management supports (i.e., support with food insecurity, community integration, connection to primary and mental health care, etc.). Another 239 individuals were referred for service specific supports to help them remain stably housed (i.e., access to personal support workers, occupational therapy, trustee services, harm reduction and hoarding supports, etc.). By year end, a total of 1,860 people were actively participating in the programs.



In October 2024, the City, University Health Network (UHN), United Way Greater Toronto and Fred Victor launched Dunn House, providing 51 homes with supports for people experiencing homelessness with high volumes of emergency department visits and in-patient admissions to UHN.



# Shelter System Service Planning

## Shelter Safety Action Plan

In April 2024, we launched a study from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) on the factors that contribute to safety in Toronto's shelter system, with a focus on shelter-based violence and service restrictions. The intent of the CAMH study was to support the Division in making evidence-informed improvements to Toronto's shelter system. That study observed that the rate of incidents in the shelter system was similar to issues experienced in other service settings, showing the far-reaching impacts of the mental health crisis.

We take the findings and recommendations of the study and the safety of staff seriously. As such, in 2024, we launched a Shelter Safety Action Plan, which was adopted by City Council in December. The plan outlines 14 actions that will be implemented over the next three years, including enhanced training and specialized interventions to support people with histories of violence and service restrictions, and improved guidance on the use of service restrictions.

More information will be shared with the homelessness sector as work to support the Shelter Safety Action Plan continues.

## Launch of the Behavioural Risk Alert Safety System - BRASS

To support shelter system safety, in May 2024, we launched BRASS, a way to document information about clients involved in incidents of workplace violence using the City's Shelter Information Management System. BRASS allows for increased information sharing between shelter programs, so that staff can undertake proactive safety planning when supporting clients with a history of violent behaviour. It does not result in a denial of access to services.

## 2024 Street Needs Assessment

In October 2024, working with partners from across the homelessness and allied services sector, we undertook our sixth Street Needs Assessment (SNA), a city-wide point-in-time count and survey of people experiencing homelessness.

The SNA, which is a condition of Federal Reaching Home funding, provides critically important insight and data on the scope and profile of people experiencing homelessness, while also giving the people we serve a voice in identifying the services and supports that help them most.

Thanks to the work of staff and partners we were able to speak to more than 3,600 people experiencing homelessness through the 2024 SNA – the largest number of people to date! This information will be used to inform evidence-based service planning, including the development of the City's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan for Homelessness Services.

We look forward to sharing the results of the 2024 Street Needs Assessment in 2025.





## 2025-2030 Strategic Plan for Homelessness Services

Our division is currently developing a five-year Strategic Plan that will serve as the City of Toronto's roadmap to address homelessness in partnership with other levels of government. The Strategic Plan will utilize a multi-divisional and sector-wide approach, propose major initiatives with defined outcomes, and create a multi-year blueprint for making strategic decisions and investments around homelessness.

Gathering input from our stakeholders is a key step in the development of the Strategic Plan. With the support of SN Management, between September to December 2024 we hosted 20 in-person and virtual engagement sessions and connected with over 400 people to discuss the Strategic Plan. Participants included our staff, homelessness service providers, youth and refugee-serving agencies, Indigenous-led agencies, health and harm reduction partners, people with lived experience of homelessness, and others. Additionally, a survey was distributed between October and November, gathering input from approximately 175 participants representing food banks, academics, Business Improvement Areas, community organizations, homelessness advocates, and other stakeholders.

A report summarizing the results of this engagement can be found on the City's website: [2025-2030 Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness – City of Toronto](#).

We also engaged with key City Divisions in December 2024, and plan to continue in 2025 by engaging with additional Divisions, different levels of government and other key stakeholders. This work will lead up to the Strategic Plan's development and submission to City Council by the end of 2025.







We celebrate and recognize the commitment and dedication of staff who make a difference every day







# Looking Ahead

## Ongoing Service Planning

The results of our Street Needs Assessment (SNA) will be released in 2025, providing important insight into the profile and needs of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, which we know has changed since the last SNA in 2021. This insight, along with our engagement results, will be used to inform the development of our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness, which will be presented at City Council by the end of 2025. We will also continue implementing our Shelter Safety Action Plan to improve shelter safety for both staff and clients. Amendments to Toronto Shelter Standards and 24-hour Respite Site Standards on service restrictions have already been released, along with corresponding resources to help staff implement the amendments. We are also continuing to focus on implementing a specialized program to support clients with incidents of violence and plan to launch enhanced supports for City staff following serious occurrences.

## Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy

Several major initiatives related to the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) will move forward in 2025. This includes work to identify, evaluate and secure five new permanent shelters. Design and development will also begin on the six sites secured last year. To support shelter operations, results of our Expression of Interest (EOI) to select non-profit organizations to operate adult, family, senior and youth programs will be finalized. Based on feedback and consultation with the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board, the first Indigenous site will be an Indigenous women shelter, with site design and construction beginning in 2025. Our EOI to select an operator for the City's first Black-mandated shelter will also close. As we continue to announce new shelters, we will engage the surrounding communities, councillors and businesses to co-create solutions to ensure the successful integration of new shelters.







## Encampment Support

Work to connect individuals in encampments with shelter, housing and supports will continue in 2025. In the first three months of 2025, the Enhanced Outreach Model has been used to resolve encampments at Bellevue Square Park, Little Norway Park and Trinity Square, and is continuing at Dufferin Grove Park. Outreach and encampment support will expand in 2025, thanks in part to funds committed through the Federal Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampments Initiative, which is providing \$25.8 million over two years (2024-25 and 2025-26). These funds will allow us to hire and train additional front-line outreach staff and partner agencies, invest in more Indigenous-led supports, and leverage partnerships with health, mental health and addiction providers to support people with complex needs living in encampments.

## Refugee Response

With some stabilization and slowing of refugee arrivals in early 2025, we are turning attention from emergency measures that were necessary to respond to the rapid growth in refugee-related demand, to planning for a separate refugee service system with wrap-around supports that meet their unique needs. We also continue to work with partners to establish additional refugee houses across Toronto. In parallel, focussed efforts will continue to reduce the number of refugee clients throughout the shelter system through ongoing transfers to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada hotels, case management, diversion to the Peel Reception Centre and other strategies. Work will also continue with other municipalities and orders of government to promote coordination and creation of a national-level refugee response.



