



City of Toronto

## COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSION

### New Shelter at 68 Sheppard Ave. W.

Tuesday, July 8, 2025

North York Civic Centre, 5100 Yonge Street

Drop-In from 6 – 7 p.m., Presentation and Questions and Answers from 7 – 8:30 p.m.

## FEEDBACK SUMMARY – DRAFT

*A Community Drop-in and Information Session was held on July 8, 2025 from 6-8:30 p.m. for residents to learn more about the upcoming shelter at 68 Sheppard Ave. W., ask questions, and meet staff from The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT), the service provider for the upcoming site. Approximately 75 community members were in attendance. The session held at the North York Civic Centre was facilitated by Community Engagement Facilitator Joe Mihevc.*

*The event began with a community drop-in event from 6 to 7 p.m. where community members could speak with City staff from the Planning & Development Department, CreateTO, Toronto Shelter & Support Services, Toronto Police Service, and The Native Women's Resource Centre of*

*Toronto. This format allowed for one-on-one conversation and for residents to have their questions answered directly by staff.*



# Opening Ceremony & Remarks

The formal part of the evening was held in Council Chambers beginning at 7 p.m.

Anishinaabe Grandmother Vivian Recollet provided opening remarks, prayer and a ceremonial smudge to open the Community Information Session segment of the evening. Buffalo Charging Drum Group offered an opening song, together with Jingle Dress dancer, Abby.

Loretta Ramadhin, Director of Infrastructure Planning and Development, Toronto Shelter & Support Services Division (TSSS), gave an overview of the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) and spoke to the overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the shelter system. Ramadhin explained the importance of offering culturally appropriate services like those provided by NWRCT, and the value of traditional teachings and ceremonies in helping Indigenous women in their journey towards safe and permanent housing.

Councillor Lily Cheng, Ward 18 Willowdale, welcomed the community to the meeting and introduced this meeting as an opportunity for open conversation and to ask questions as the community takes this journey together. The Councillor encouraged understanding and compassion and acknowledged that there may be differing opinions and mixed emotions within the community. Councillor Cheng introduced Pamela Hart, Executive Director of The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto, and spoke to the organization's proven track record of supporting the community and the importance of taking a cultural and holistic approach as a path towards healing for Indigenous women.

Pamela Hart, Executive Director of The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto, described the urgent need for a shelter space for Indigenous women who experience trauma, are overrepresented in human trafficking, experience high rates of violence against women and are

disproportionately involved with the justice system; however, Pamela also emphasized that Indigenous women also have incredible strength, resilience, and positive qualities to offer the community. Hart spoke to NWRCT's strong legacy of support for Indigenous women and the plan to carry this legacy on through the new shelter.

As a part of her presentation and opening remarks, Pamela showed a video highlighting NWRCT's work and services, including grocery support, baby items, crisis support, and traditional healing and ceremonies. The video can be viewed [here](#).

## Questions & Answers Session

Following the presentations, the event transitioned to the open Questions & Answers part of the agenda where community members could ask questions or raise concerns to be addressed by the panelists. Panelists included Councillor Lily Cheng (Ward 18, Willowdale), Loretta Ramadhin (Director of Infrastructure Planning & Development, Toronto Shelter & Support Services), Simon McKenzie (CreateTO), and Chris Pereira (Development Review).

Community members wishing to address the panel were invited to line up in front of the seated area at a podium equipped with a microphone. To ensure there was sufficient time for all interested community members to ask a question, participants were encouraged to keep their questions brief and respectful.

### 1. Questions and comments about integrating the shelter into the community

A question was raised on where the children who are staying with women at the shelter will be attending school.

*Panelists explained that TSSS works with the Toronto District School Board to ensure schooling for children across all shelters in the city, and that children staying with women at the shelter will be*

*enrolled in local schools. The NWRCT has offered support to local schools on Indigenous issues and events, such as Orange Shirt Day and Red Dress Day.*

## 2. Support from the community

Several community members and residents wished to express their support for the new shelter and offer words of welcome to Pamela, NWRCT, and the shelter's service users. Residents were interested in learning about how they can support the shelter once it is open. Speakers also expressed their hope that this can be an opportunity for the community to come together to learn and ask questions, and to move forward in the spirit of reconciliation. One community member suggested that this shelter can serve as a "case study" for future shelters that may open in other parts of the city.

*The panelists encouraged community members to continue to get to know the shelter operator, including through the hosting of smaller group meetings in the future to build relationships in the spirit of finding ways to contribute to the wellness of both the shelter community and the broader community. This goal of long-term relationship building is a part of the reconciliation process.*

## 3. Experience in shelter management

A resident asked how The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto has been planning to take on their first ever shelter.

*Executive Director Pamela Hart shared that she has significant experience managing several shelters, including a men's shelter. The NWRCT has consistently advocated for more shelter spaces for Indigenous women who are often left out of the conversation regarding shelter spaces. This advocacy has been recognized by the City through the designation of this shelter space. This shelter is a clear next step for the agency, which has 40+ years of experience supporting Indigenous women and is guided by a strong network of support.*

## 4. Concern about shelter, community impacts, and safety

Questions were raised regarding community safety, such as how the safety of those in the shelter and in the community are being considered, along with concerns over drug use in the shelter.

*Loretta Ramadhin explained that all City-administered shelters operate in compliance with Toronto Shelter Standards, which include safety provisions. These standards will be worked into the internal policies of this shelter and will guide the decision making and operational practice of the shelter. More information on Toronto Shelter Standards can be found [here](#).*

*Panelists clarified that the shelter will not be a Safe Consumption Site, but individuals who use substances will not be discriminated against or prohibited from accessing the shelter.*

*The shelter will offer much-needed safety and community support to Indigenous women who are in crisis, giving them a safe space to be in the community. A cultural approach will also be taken to decrease safety concerns by offering needed supports, including traditional teachings and medicines to ground those in crisis.*

*Pamela recognized that this site will be a change for the local neighbourhood and that the community's safety concerns will be a part of the planning for successful community integration. The safety and security of the service users will certainly be given the utmost attention. At the same time, the NWRCT assured attendees that the organization will take seriously the safety and care, new neighbours, and the surrounding community.*

*Pamela emphasized that everyone is on a spectrum of need of care and that there is a lack of resources and spaces for most populations, and even less for Indigenous women. The NWRCT is doing what is needed for community, recognizing that for too long, the voices of Indigenous women have gone ignored and silenced and as they fight for their*



*humanity. This shelter will be a stepping stone to their rightful places and a step in healing.*

## 5. Questions about zoning and shelter design

A question was raised on the zoning allowance for the shelter and clarification was requested regarding shelter zoning and property line and height allowance for the shelter. Another related question was raised regarding the shelter design, including the height, the external design including green space, and the internal organization of the rooms within the shelter.

*Chris explained that the site is zoned for mixed-use which supports the construction of a shelter. There is a public report on the shelter's zoning allowance with more details which can be found [here](#). Chris further explained that the design process is in very early stages, and that there will be deep engagement to turn the design into something meaningful and beautiful in collaboration with the shelter operator. These comments will be taken into consideration as the design work with the operator and the City continues to develop.*



## Closing Remarks

Pamela Hart extended thanks to the community members in attendance for showing their support and expressed gratitude to be carving out pathways forward together, and to community members who spoke on reconciliation and the original land protectors. Councillor Lily Cheng extended thanks to Pamela Hart and the NWRCT for their work, especially their focus on positive human relationships. Community members were encouraged to continue to be involved in the process moving forward, to welcome the new shelter site and to create precedent setting community support for Indigenous women in the city of Toronto.