

Ombudsman Toronto Housing Unit's First Investigation Report

Submission to Toronto City Council

December 16, 2024

Submission by: Right to Housing Toronto



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City Clerk
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of Toronto City Council,

Re: CC24.1 - Ombudsman Toronto Report - An Investigation into the City's Decision to Stop Allowing Refugee Claimants into Base Shelter System Beds

We are representatives of the Right to Housing Toronto (R2HTO), a network of organizations and individuals working to support the implementation of the right to housing by the City of Toronto. We are writing in response to item [CC24.1](#) regarding the Ombudsman Toronto Report, [An Investigation into the City's Decision to Stop Allowing Refugee Claimants into Base Shelter System Beds](#), and in particular, in response to the City Manager's [statement](#) that he disagrees with some of the findings in the report and will not direct the City to implement the recommendations.

We are deeply concerned by this response and the City's apparent position that the right to housing is merely "aspirational." We strongly agree with the Ombudsman that the City must uphold its commitment to realizing the right to housing through concrete actions and commitments. Critically, this must include taking seriously and acting upon recommendations put forward by key accountability bodies, like the Ombudsman, that help to monitor and enforce the right to housing through systemic investigations and reviews.

The establishment of the Ombudsman Toronto's Housing Unit was a significant achievement in the City's progress toward its commitment to taking a human rights-based approach to its housing policies and programs, following prolonged advocacy from [R2HTO](#) and other advocates across the city. However, failing to consider and act on recommendations from the Ombudsman signals a troubling shift away from that commitment, which is enshrined in the Toronto Housing Charter and reflects federal and international human rights law. Moreover, failing to uphold the right to housing will only serve to further perpetuate Toronto's housing and homelessness crisis, disproportionately impacting those in the greatest need, such as refugee claimants.

We strongly urge Toronto City Council to direct City staff to closely review and implement the recommendations in the Ombudsman's report and reaffirm its commitment to advancing the right to housing, including by prioritizing the needs of communities most impacted by the housing and homelessness crisis.



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The Ombudsman's report is the culmination of the first investigation undertaken by its Housing Unit. The report includes 14 key recommendations to improve fairness, transparency, and the City's adherence to the human right to adequate housing in its decision-making processes, including by training staff on the human right to adequate housing. R2HTO and our network of community partners have significant experience and expertise in providing training on housing as a human right, and we would be pleased to coordinate training opportunities with City staff to provide a thorough understanding of the right to housing, including concrete actions the City can take to address the housing and homelessness crisis through a rights-based approach.

Thank you,
On behalf of Right to Housing Toronto (R2HTO)



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