

Identifying and Addressing Pressures in the Refugee and Emergency Shelter System

Submission to Toronto City Council

March 25, 2025

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: CC28.2 - Identifying and Addressing Pressures in the Refugee and Emergency Shelter System

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 [CC28.2](#) regarding the Mayor's recommendation that City Council consider several reports and communications on equitable access to Toronto's shelter and housing system. Chief among these reports is the December 2024 [Ombudsman Toronto report](#), which investigated the City's decision to stop allowing refugee claimants into base shelter system beds.

While we are encouraged that City Council is revisiting the critical topic of access to the City's shelter and housing system, we remain concerned about the lack of action to accept and implement the recommendations from the Ombudsman's report, particularly as it relates to confronting anti-Black racism and advancing the right to housing. As we outlined in our [previous letter](#) to City Council on the Ombudsman's report, the City's commitments around anti-Black racism and the right to housing are not "aspirational" and must be implemented meaningfully through concrete actions and investments.

Reflecting recent [comments](#) from the City's Housing Rights Advisory Committee, this means taking tangible steps to follow through on the City's commitments by "setting targets, measuring progress, ensuring non-discrimination, enabling participation, acting transparently, and being accountable to its outcomes." This must include taking seriously and acting upon recommendations put forward by key accountability bodies, like the Ombudsman, and meaningfully engaging with communities most impacted by anti-Black racism and the housing and homelessness crisis, like refugee claimants.

R2HTO strongly supports the [ongoing advocacy](#) of the African Canadian Collective and Crisis in Our City Network, who represent many of the organizations that responded to meet the needs of refugee claimants that were excluded from the City's shelter system. As such, we echo calls from those groups for the Mayor and City Council to:



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1. **Direct the City Manager** to fully adopt and implement the recommendations from the Ombudsman's report, including:
 - a. Transparent and equitable decision-making regarding shelter access;
 - b. Meaningful consultation with impacted communities and service providers;
 - c. A comprehensive policy review to eliminate exclusionary practices; and
 - d. Upholding Toronto's commitment to human rights, including the right to housing.
2. **Ensure that the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee (CABRAC)** plays an integral role in overseeing this process and advising City Council on next steps.
3. **Honour the Mayor's public commitment** to meet with impacted communities, made following the press conference held by the African Canadian Collective and the Crisis in Our City Network in December 2024. Community members have expressed disappointment and frustration that such a meeting has yet to take place.

Alongside the Housing Rights Advisory Committee, 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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