

Housed and Sheltered

How do City services touch women's lives?

Women who live in Toronto are affected daily by the decisions made by the City. This includes sorting and taking out the garbage, walking with their children in the park, riding the bus to work, accessing essential services like transit, community centres, housing, and much more.

In 2010, the TWCA released a research report on women's experiences of City services.

In Toronto, for almost 20% of women and girls, housing is neither affordable, available, nor appropriate. This is because on average, women are poorer than men, especially when we are lone parents, elderly, live with a disability, victims of violence or belong to a marginalized group. In Toronto, there are more than 70,000 households on the waiting list for affordable housing.

Canada has endorsed housing as a human right. This makes the supply of housing a social responsibility and not something to be left solely to market forces. Until this commitment is realized, Canada's governments remain in violation of human rights.

Availability and Affordability

"If you notice lately, all the big shelters are closing in downtown Toronto. These are all downtown shelters. They're closing them down and they're putting condos in these places."

Building rental housing is not as profitable for private developers as ownership housing, resulting in a shortage of rental housing and an escalation of rents. Tenants face greater affordability problems than owners and spend a larger amount of their income on shelter costs than home owners. Women-led single-family households, single women, and senior women are also more likely to be tenants than homeowners and often spend more than 50% of their income on housing.

Appropriate, Quality and Safe Housing

"Bed bugs is a torture to us... it has become an epidemic and our lives almost totally ruined." – Low-income newcomer mother

Many women, especially single parents, are forced to live in substandard housing that may be far from services, transportation or jobs and has insufficient space to accommodate special needs or children.

Bed bugs, unsafe neighbourhoods, property standards violations, and harassment are just some of the conditions that women face when they are forced to live in inadequate housing. Recent budget cuts to funding for tenant

organizations will make it more difficult for women to access information and advocacy to help them battle slum landlords and poor living conditions.

Women want:

- All levels of government to fund social and cooperative housing construction to eliminate homelessness and the social housing waiting list within 10 years. At the very least, Toronto needs to provide 1000 affordable units a year, as recommended in the HOT Report which Toronto City Council has adopted.
- Developers of multiple residential housing to provide 25% of their units as affordable, family-sized units.
- Toronto Community Housing to stop privatising any of its housing stock unless it obtains double the units in return for every unit sold and improve its existing housing stock.
- The City of Toronto to reverse the cuts to funding for the Tenant Defense Fund.

TORONTO WOMEN'S CITY ALLIANCE

Making Equality Matter...

TWCA calls for the establishment of a Toronto Women's Equalities Office that could spearhead the development of an action plan for equality for women in all their diversity. This office could monitor city services, create recommendations to end the systemic discrimination against women, prepare a Report Card and connect with and provide support to organizations working with women across the City.

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For the complete research report, go to:
http://www.twca.ca/TWCA-publications/uploads/TWCA_June_2010a.pdf