



**Deputation to the City of Toronto Community  
Development and Recreation Committee –  
AS DELIVERED  
July 20, 2011**

Hello, my name is Linsey MacPhee and I am Manager of the Toronto Drop-in Network, a member driven organization of over 50 drop-ins throughout the City of Toronto. I am here to represent our members and their participants, some of whom are the poorest and most vulnerable Toronto residents.

Torontonians have identified meeting the needs of vulnerable people third in importance after transparent government and infrastructure with most believing shelter, support and housing for homeless and low-income people are necessary services for the City to provide and to fund. Drop-ins have been found to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness develop critical personal capacities that underpin achieving positive outcomes in housing and employment. Torontonians *are* willing to pay to ensure services and supports are in place to create a path out of the cycle of homelessness and that path travels in, around and through drop-ins.

The people drop-ins support are vulnerable; many are homeless, poor, alone, old, in ill-health and other forms of distress. So, what might happen if shelter beds are closed, if homeless and housing supports in the community receive cuts rather than needed investment?

Drop-ins are embedded in our city's economy, our service infrastructure and our public policy framework. Gaps and inadequacies in any of these areas erupt on the drop-in floor and in the streets – in increased homelessness, hunger, ill health, violence, crime, personal injury and preventable deaths – these are the crises that will have to be managed by more costly City services like EMS and the Toronto

Police Service. It is false economy to cut shelter beds and homeless and housing supports in the community.

Consider the success of the Streets to Homes program and in that consideration note the fact that drop-ins are an often unacknowledged partner in that success. When people who experience homelessness are settled successfully, they connect to their local communities, to the *drop-ins* in those communities, where they can take their meals, find a friendly ear and engage in meaningful and productive activities which include employment. Drop-ins provide more than individual support to people, involving them in creating the drop-in community through taking on valued and responsible activities in the running of the drop-in itself. This mutual support and sense of connection helps people become part of a community, reduces social isolation and helps people maintain their housing – without that local support people will struggle alone to maintain their housing and the shelter doors will continue to revolve and the cycle of homelessness will continue; this is more false economy.

An independent analysis of funding of drop-ins commissioned by the Shelter Support and Housing Administration, found that the drop-in sector is a critical component of the City of Toronto's response to homelessness and plays a key role in fulfilling Council's direction to help people find and maintain their housing. For each \$1.00 invested from the City of Toronto drop-ins are able to leverage \$5.00 from other funders to support services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The power of a dollar in City funding is magnified further by the extensive use of volunteers in the drop-in sector where the role played by countless volunteers supplementing the services of paid staff leverages over three dollars more. Drop-ins offer an astounding return on investment with a million dollars in City funding generating a further \$8.34 million in homeless and housing support in the community

By all means expand successful programs like Streets to Homes, but we are asking you to also look for savings where they can truly be found. **We are asking the Community Development and Recreation Committee to recommend to**

**Executive Committee investment in community-based drop-ins as complementary homeless and housing supports to the services of the Streets to Homes program.** This mixed model of service delivery is highly cost effective and responsive to community needs; it appears not to have been adequately explored in considering alternative models of shelter, housing and support in the KPMG report, therefore **we are also asking that the Community Development and Recreation Committee request the City Manager to inform his report to Executive Committee on September 19 with an examination of the role of drop-ins in helping people find and maintain housing and the service efficiencies to be realized by investing in the mixed model for homeless and housing support in the community vis a vis increased investment in the Streets to Homes program.**

Thank you for your time this morning.

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