SSBAC
SHELTER AND SUPPORT
BOARD ADVOCACY COALITION

Community Voice for Systemic Change
Shelter and Support Sector

ANNUAL REPORT 09/2024 – 09/2025

Jawad A. Kassab, Chair SSBAC
2025-09-30

Building community care together

A STRONG Shelter and Support SECTOR

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Founded in 2023 by the Fred Victor Board of Directors

Effecting systemic change in the shelter and support sector by mobilizing **Board Directors**, the community voice

SSBAC represents community operated agencies serving women, men, Black and racialized francophones, youth, refugees, people living with HIV/AIDS, seniors, persons with addictions, mental health challenges

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MEMBERS

eva's

YWCA TORONTO | NATIONAL ADVOCACY. COMMUNITY ACTION. | United Way Greater Toronto FUNDED AGENCY

L'Agapanthe™
Maison de transition de La Passerelle-I.D.É.

fred victor

FIFE HOUSE
HOPE HELP HOME

DIXON HALL

TNG Community Services | CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
NEIGHBOURHOOD LINK
ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY HOUSE

SOJOURN HOUSE

PARTNERS

TORONTO SHELTER NETWORK

ONTARIO NONPROFIT NETWORK

Primary Issue - The wage challenge

1. **Lack of wage parity with City staff**

Community operated shelter staff with the same job, responsibility, and qualifications as City operated shelter staff receive significantly lower wages (24% in the case of front-line staff: 30% in the case of managers)

2. **Inadequate City funding to pay a fair wage to shelter/support staff**

Community operated shelter and support staff cannot sustain themselves on current wages

3. **Staffing challenges that impact services and delivery of mission**

Community operated shelters are competing with, and losing talent to, municipalities and private sector. Significant staff turnover, heavy reliance on temp agencies, recruitment and training, impacting shelter client services/costs

Inadequate City Funding

Community Operated Shelters vs. City Operated Shelters

- **24%: Frontline workers** in community operated shelters receive 24% less in wages than City operated shelters due to inadequate City funding

- **30%: Managers** in community operated shelters receive 30% less in wages than City operated shelters due to inadequate City funding

Impact of Inadequate Shelter Funding on Service Costs, Clients and Community

- Shelters competing with, and losing talent to, municipalities, private sector
- Significant staff turnover
- Heavy reliance on temp agencies
- Recurring recruitment, orientation and training
- Staff health – sick days, low morale
- Impacting business continuity – service to clients and community

CITY COMMITMENT

Across community operated shelters, front line staff in 2024 were paid on average **$53,000**

City front line staff in 2024 were paid on average **$69,000**

City commitment to raise agency front line salaries to **$65,000** over the next two to three years

City's 2025 budget contains a **$7M** sector enhancement plus cost-of-living adjustment

Closing the Wage Gap: City and Community Operated Shelters

- The 2024 and 2025 City of Toronto budget contains $7M in agency enhancement funding primarily for community operated **frontline staff.** This funding is greatly appreciated by the sector.

- $7M does not adequately address the frontline staff wage gap

- $7M does not provide for any increase in manager wages

CUPE Collective Agreement 2025-28

SSBAC supports City operated shelter and support staff in their efforts to increase their wages. SSBAC commends the City for arriving at an agreement.

Without a similar increase in funding for community operated shelter and support staff, the wage disparity and inequity will worsen for our staff.

CUPE: Collective Agreement 2025-2028

From 2026 to 2028, all members will receive annual wage increases of three to 3.9 per cent year over year.

Provincial Funding

- The Province's budget has an increase of **$75M** for Homelessness Prevention Programs in addition to Province's annual $700M investment

- This increase is under the Budget Heading "Cleaning Up our Streets", giving municipalities more tools to clean up parks and public spaces by ending encampments and cracking down on public drug use.

- SSBAC is exploring an expanded advocacy role to include the Provincial Government

INVEST

Community operated shelters provide close to 75% of frontline client care. Demand for services keeps increasing.

More investment is needed to ensure

- ❑ Fair wages for community operated shelter staff to live and work in Toronto
- ❑ Less City funds go to temp agencies to fill shifts, constant recruitment and training
- ❑ Better and more homeless services from a supported and healthy workforce
- ❑ Equity for services provided by racialized staff, and dignity
- ❑ Stronger shelter and support sector – more homeless sheltered and cared for
- ❑ Healthier, stronger City of Toronto

What has SSBAC been doing?

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- ❑ SSBAC meets monthly by Zoom
- ❑ SSBAC met with City Staffers, Councillors, Mayor's Office
- ❑ City staffers:
  - **Gordon Tanner**, General Manager, Shelter Support & Housing Administration
  - **Kate Richardson**, Director, Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention Services
- ❑ City Councillors:
  - **Alejandra Bravo**, City Councillor Ward 9 – Davenport, and Chairperson, Economic and Community Development Committee
  - **Chris Moise**, City Councillor Ward 13 – Toronto Centre, and Member of the Budget Committee
  - **Gord Perks**, City Councillor, Ward 4 – Parkdale, High Park
- ❑ Mayor's Office:
  - **Chezlie Alexander**, City of Toronto, Mayor's Office, Legislative Affairs, Implementation
- ❑ Presenting at Conferences: ONN Conference 2024, TSN Conference 2024
- ❑ Budget deputation: City of Toronto January 2025

What Impact has SSBAC had?

- Mobilized the sector to ensure maximum impact through “strength in numbers” - coalition for addressing inequities through a community voice that brings about systemic change
- Generated solidarity among Board Directors of shelter and support service agencies
- Raised awareness of wage unfairness with City staff, councilors, mayor’s office that has moved the dial
- Developed positive collaborative relationship with the City, focusing on “closing the wage” gap together
- Spurred board advocacy conversations for other sectors – health, childcare

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SSBAC Members' Role: Board Director

What role do Board members play in SSBAC?

1. Community representatives – Board Directors are volunteers from the community entrusted with stewarding a community asset/service
2. Voices in support of the voiceless – persons who are homeless need the support of others to build a strong shelter and support sector
3. Effective advocates for some issues such as staff wage increases – management and staff perception of conflict
4. Board Directors across numerous agencies can work together to effect systemic change by collaborating as a coalition

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SSBAC Partners Role: Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN), Toronto Shelter Network (TSN)

What role do partners play in SSBAC?
Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN)

1. ONN produced a paper “Creating Wage Parity and Community Care” that was a catalyst for SSBAC’s focus on the issue of wage parity
2. ONN is a source of data on wage parity and how it is driving the non-profit labour force crisis
3. ONN supports the critical role of Board Directors advocating for systemic change by increasing knowledge of advocacy tactics and strategy through learning opportunities

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What role do partners play in SSBAC?
Toronto Shelter Network (TSN)

1. TSN actively supports SSBAC's efforts at advocacy by attending SSBAC advocacy events, increasing credibility and influence
2. TSN provides data regarding the shelter sector
3. TSN keeps SSBAC connected to developments in the sector

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SSBAC Management Role

What role do managers play in SSBAC?

1. Identifying potential members and partners for SSBAC
2. Assisting with shelter and support agency connections, networking
3. Providing core operational information
4. Providing knowledge of funders
5. Supporting the alignment of vision and strategic directions with SSBAC advocacy

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Advocacy Guidelines

- Incremental steps – advocacy requires capacity, skill, and knowledge which will develop over time
- Framed by Board policy and linked to strategy to guide decision-making
- Factual, and evidence based
- Focus on one key issue/pillar for 2-3 years offering a better chance of systemic change
- Collaboration with other system partners – coalition building. Macro level issues addressed with collective resolve and action across the sector.
- SSBAC will develop key advocacy relationships with
  - Other non-profit Boards in the sector
  - Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN)
  - The Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses
  - The Toronto Shelter Network
  - The Neighbourhood Group
  - The Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness
- Critical assessment of the risks and benefits of advocacy for each issue/pillar – approaches need to be sensitive and astute as they involve political players and government

Future 2025-26

Work Plan 2025-26

- ❑ Ongoing advocacy training and development of SSBAC members
- ❑ Continuation of wage equity advocacy
- ❑ Ensuring SSBAC presence at new shelter community engagement events
- ❑ Broadening advocacy to include the Province and Feds
- ❑ Supporting Toronto refugee shelter/transition home services

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Should your Board be interested in learning more about the Shelter and Support Board Advocacy Coalition

- ❑ Invite SSBAC to present at a Board Meeting
- ❑ Attend a SSBAC Meeting as an observer

Jawad Kassab (kassabja@rogers.com)
SSBAC Chair
Fred Victor Board Representative