

January 14, 2016

City of Toronto welcomes start of housing support services for LGBTQ2S youth at YMCA Sprott House, largest in Canada

Mayor John Tory and Councillor Joe Cressy (Ward 20, Trinity-Spadina) announced the start of shelter support services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirited (LGBTQ2S) homeless youth at YMCA Sprott House. The 25-bed transitional housing program is the first of two programs for LGBTQ2S homeless youth in Toronto expected to open in 2016. This is the largest of its kind and one of only a handful across the country.

Mayor Tory and Councillor Cressy were joined by Medhat Mahdy, CEO, YMCA of Greater Toronto and Diane Sinhuber, Chair of the Board of Directors, YMCA of Greater Toronto. Chair of the Annex Residents' Association David Harrison and Dr. Alex Abramovich, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) also joined to welcome these services in the community.

"In the 2015 budget, we made a monumental investment to support members of the LGBTQ2S community who have been left behind," said Mayor John Tory. "The YMCA Sprott House will provide a safe, inclusive space for those who need a helping hand".

"Extensive research and community input make it clear that LGBTQ2S youth are an underserved population within our existing shelter system in," said Councillor Joe Cressy. "YMCA Sprott House will provide support for youth to access critical services, while living in a safe and supportive environment. We are proud to welcome these services to our community.

City staff met with a group of community stakeholders from the LGBTQ2S community in the fall of 2012. At the time the group identified, among other issues, the lack of demographic data related to homelessness among the LGBTQ2S community.

As a result of these discussions, a question was included in the 2013 Street Needs Assessment to determine an estimate of the number and needs of LGBTQ2S people experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

The 2013 Street Needs Assessment indicated that 21% or one in five homeless youth in Toronto identify as LGBTQ2S, more than twice the overall rate for all survey respondents (9%). Given the stigma which can be associated with 'coming out' as LGBTQ2S it is possible that this is an under-estimate of the total number of LGBTQ2S people who are homeless.

City Council approved funding for two LGBTQ2S youth shelters in Shelter Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) 2015 Operating Budget

The City selected the YMCA's proposal to provide transitional housing to LGBTQ2S house the youth shelter in their Sprott House.

“I am very proud the YMCA of Greater Toronto was selected to operate a transitional housing program for LGBTQ2S youth in the City of Toronto,” says Medhat Mahdy, YMCA of Greater Toronto President & CEO. “The YMCA recognizes and values diversity and social inclusion as underpinnings of what we stand for and what we do. Sprott will offer a safe and welcoming environment LGBTQ2SA youth need to transition to a healthy adulthood. I truly believe Sprott House will impact the health and lives of everyone it touches.”

The YMCA is currently accepting referrals through their website. Clients will begin moving into YMCA Sprott House on February 1, and the YMCA anticipates that all 25 beds will be occupied by mid-March 2016.

The YMCA's Sprott House, is located on Walmer Road in Ward 20.

Toronto is Canada's largest city, the fourth largest in North America, and home to a diverse population of about 2.8 million people. It is a global centre for business, finance, arts and culture and is consistently ranked one of the world's most livable cities. For information on non-emergency City services and programs, Toronto residents, businesses and visitors can visit <http://www.toronto.ca>, call 311, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or follow us @TorontoComms.

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