

Community Development & Social Action **UPDATE**

SPRING 2026

\$10 a Day Childcare Advocacy



TNGCS child care peer parent Jan Amito calls on the Ontario Government to make firmly commit to ongoing \$10 a day childcare.

By Child Care Peer Parents Janet Amito and Stephani Merali

As peer parents we believe in building community and amplifying parent voices. In our work on the \$10-a-day child care advocacy campaign we have met with legislators, attended community events, and spoken with the media to share one message: parents deserve better.

The promise of a universal child care system through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program by 2025 to 2026 must be kept. In March 2026 fees were supposed to reduce from \$22 to \$10 a day, instead the Ontario government extended the deadline to March 2027. Families across Ontario are counting on child care that is accessible, affordable, and high quality. Strong childcare systems benefit everyone, supporting parents' ability to work, strengthening local economies and helping children thrive.

Many Ontario families still face long waitlists, staffing shortages and limited affordable spaces, paying more than \$10 a day. Challenges facing early childhood educators affect the stability and growth of licensed childcare.

Meaningful change requires continued advocacy. Parents and caregivers must push for full rollout of affordable child care, expanded licensed spaces, fair wages for early childhood educators and equitable access across communities.

Stay engaged and share your voice. Join Parents for Child Care by texting PARENT to +1-647-556-5873, or connect with other families in the Toronto Parents for Child Care Facebook group to stay informed and get involved.

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AND MORE!

Safespot Program Lead Urges Expanded Peer Programs across Toronto Shelters

By Naomi Njenga, *Team Lead with the TNGCS SafeSpot Program*

I am passionately committed to the full expansion of the peer led SafeSpot peer-led harm reduction and employment work across our shelter system. I speak from personal experience. I spent 17 years cycling through Toronto's shelter system, struggling with addiction and trauma. Shelters gave me a bed, but not a way forward.

The missing piece for me and for many others was employment. Without income, people remain stuck waiting in the shelter system for years. Traditional employment was not built for people managing trauma, recovery or housing instability. Peer employment changed that for me. My lived experience became a qualification. I was given a low barrier, trauma informed role where setbacks were met with support, not punishment. This opportunity helped me rebuild my stability and confidence.

Today I support others who are where I once was. Peer workers operate inside shelters, preventing overdoses, de-escalating crises, and helping clients build routine and trust. The real outcomes include paid work, education and permanent jobs. If we keep funding shelters without employment pathways, we keep funding the revolving door.

Urban Health and Homelessness Services at TNGCS is working to expand this peer program across our shelter system to ensure that shelters stop being a revolving door.

You can watch Naomi's longer version of this message, which she delivered to the 2026 City Budget Committee: <https://www.youtube.com/live/7FWjvuLqHLk?t=3355s>



Budget Subcommittee at City Hall - January 20, 2026 - 9:30 AM

Naomi Njenga delivered a forceful deputation at the City Budget Committee on January 20, 2026. She called on the city government to expand funding for the SafeSpot program and offer more opportunities across the shelter system.

A New Partnership Tackles Stigma around Unhoused and Substance Use

by Jess McCandless

TNGCS Urban Housing and Homelessness Services is helping shift how people view those who dwell in poverty and who use substances. A new project in Kensington Market pairs community based information with arts based engagement. TNGCS's recent environmental scan identified a notable gap between systems level advocacy and sustained, grassroots destigmatization, particularly in Downtown West communities.

To address the gap, a new bulletin helps residents and neighbours better understand local programs, services and responses to the homelessness crisis. Client centred photography and art programming is being developed with local artists. This work creates meaningful opportunities for participants to share their own perspectives, amplify lived experience and contribute to a more informed and connected community dialogue. The project will culminate with a mobile PhotoVoice book and community art show hosted by our Kensington Market TNG site.

These initiatives are intended to humanize experiences of homelessness and substance use, strengthen relationships across the neighbourhood, and help build more welcoming communities for all.

At the systems level, we are collaborating with the Ontario Nonprofit Network on systems level advocacy to address the growing legal challenges facing social service providers and to help protect the space required to deliver essential community services.



Adapted from an original drawing by J. McCandless, 2026, modified using the prompt "apply a graphic/semi-realistic style in the same colourway to create a finished product" by N. J. Alotabi, Image Generator GPT, OpenAI, n.d. (chatgpt.com)

Public Housing Evictions And Anti-Black Racism

By Walied Khogali Ali, *community organizer and advocate in Toronto Centre.*

Black History Month is a time to celebrate Black communities, but also a time for institutional accountability. Approximately 40 per cent of Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) tenants identify as Black, making a sharp escalation in evictions deeply troubling.

The numbers tell a disturbing story. Total evictions rose from 162 households in 2023 to 391 in the first ten months of 2025. More alarming, Tribunals Ontario data shows TCHC's public figures are significantly undercounted by as much as 38 per cent. Meanwhile, mediation dropped to its lowest recorded level in 2023, directly contradicting TCHC's stated eviction prevention commitments.


These failures echo a 2010 inquiry led by Judge Patrick LeSage, which established that eviction must be a last resort and mediation must be institutionalized. Sixteen years later, those principles remain unmet. Without race disaggregated data, it is impossible to assess whether Black tenants are disproportionately affected, though housing scholar Nemo Lewis has demonstrated that eviction processes consistently harm Black communities. The TCHC Black Tenant Participatory Committee, established to ensure Black tenant voices inform governance, has not convened since its formation.

Eviction from social housing triggers homelessness, family separation and long term trauma. This is a failure of governance. Toronto must implement an immediate moratorium on social housing evictions until an independent review examines eviction drivers, reporting on discrepancies and racial impacts. The TCHC Board has the authority. City Council has the responsibility.

Regent Park Neighbourhood Association

2026

The Empowered Tenants Survey!



EMPOWERED TENANTS PROJECT



Deadline:
March 16th, 2026

- 17 questions
- 13 languages
- \$50 raffle prizes.



<https://bit.ly/etpsurvey26>

www.regentparkna.ca **info@regentparkna.ca**

Regent Park Neighbourhood Association asked TCHC tenants to fill out the survey at the link or QR code above.

Provincial Bill 6 Leads to Indigenous Harms

By Greg Breau, *Community Worker, TNGCS Corner Drop In*

TNGCS is taking action on Bill 6, Ontario's Safer Municipalities Act 2025. We are engaging Corner Drop In users who face arrest due to being accused by police of public drug use. Many face fines of up to \$10,000 or six months in prison. Some are even being removed from encampments by police without a warrant on the mere suspicion of drug use.

I put on a community discussion at the Corner Drop In on Thursday of each month called "Keep 6ix" where I invite community members to share their thoughts and experiences with Bill 6. Through these conversations it is clear that the law falls hardest on Indigenous people. Group conversations and survey reveal that up to 75 per cent of people arrested in Toronto under Bill 6 are Indigenous, while most white people arrested are let off with a warning. Indigenous displacement is historic and ongoing. Only three per cent of the overall Toronto population is Indigenous, but this constituency makes up 31 per cent of unhoused outdoor dwellers. This legislation is feeding a resurgence of colonial clearing of Indigenous people.

The law's exception for safe consumption sites is hollow: with the Ontario government's closure of the province's 17 supervised consumption sites, the Act leaves even fewer safe spaces to use substances. Drug users are thus pushed into further isolation and increased overdose risk, on top of the more than 26,000 Ontarians who have already died in the ongoing overdose crisis since 2016.

Over 100 organizations have called the law a measure that criminalizes poverty rather than solving it.



Conflict Mediation and Restorative Justice Program Expands to Scarborough



Game Changers are expanding their highly successful program

The Neighbourhood Group Community Services has expanded its Game Changers conflict mediation program into four new schools in Scarborough. They are responding to growing demands from schools across Toronto, which are struggling with high levels of youth conflict. The expansion builds on ten years of operation since the program's 2016 launch.

The expansion comes as the program grapples with changing patterns of youth violence increasingly driven by social media. Online threats between rival groups are escalating into in-person confrontations, with disagreements amplified through comment posts and music videos. Program staff are adapting their approach to address how platforms accelerate conflict. Youth often use social media to publicly express grief after violent incidents, which can invite retaliation.

Game Changers engages with many youth through mediation, wraparound supports, and training in 2024-25. Many youth reported that the program helped them feel connected to safe and caring adults.

The model combines embedded youth justice workers in schools, peer leadership employment for program graduates, conflict resolution education for staff and students and wraparound supports addressing food security and employment. Its impact at Westview Centennial Secondary School was striking. Principal Rosalie Griffith noted that the school went from two to three physical fights per day to zero fights on school property after the program's first full year.

Researchers and advocates have long argued that punitive disciplinary approaches disproportionately harm racialized youth, with Black boys suspended and expelled at rates three times their enrollment according to a 2017 report. Game Changers positions itself as a restorative alternative to zero tolerance policies, currently operating across Northwest Toronto, Kensington Market, Moss Park, St. James Town, Regent Park, and parts of Etobicoke, with Scarborough now added to the map.

Making Social Change with the Member Advocacy Committee



Roberta Taylor and Robert Condron (Former MAC member) join Helen Armstrong at City Hall for deputations at a city committee

By Roberta Taylor

I have been part of the Member Advocacy Committee (MAC) since 2020. During that time I have done deputations, including one on rooming house reform, helped shape police budgets and pushed for infrastructure repairs. I have worked with other MAC members to engage in rallies around provincial changes to ODSP, housing rights and anti-poverty issues.

As well, I have been instrumental in taking people to vote in elections for all three levels of government: city level for mayor and school trustees, provincial level for premier and members of provincial parliament and federally for the prime minister and members of parliament. I have learned to be non-partisan and not influence people who to vote for.

I have helped do numerous surveys for the MAC on various topics. The rooming house survey stands out for me in particular. Our information goes into reports which help shape government policy and have been covered by the media.

My first deputation to a city committee was on rooming houses on zoom and it was unnerving. It was hard, but I did get questions from Councillor Perks. When we went to a city hall in person committee meeting and spoke in front of the city council they weren't as receptive as that first time on zoom.

I also did a day long training with the Institute for Change Leaders. I have enjoyed the 5.5 years I have been part of the MAC and hope to continue for some time.

TNGCS Women at International Women's Day



The 115th International Women's Day rally and march on March 7, 2026 saw a great turnout from our TNGCS women's program. In total 47 women took part in the annual event. Speakers called attention to the experiences of marginalized women, including migrant workers and refugees who often face exploitation, unsafe working conditions and barriers to healthcare and fair wages.

The women wore pink bandanas, showing strong support for women's rights across the globe. For some participants this was their first time attending an event celebrating and advocating for women's empowerment, making the experience even more meaningful.

Getting Ready for our East Side Garden Project



Students in our women's program on the east side started seeds in the indoor hydroponic growing station in March 2026. Women in our program will take part in workshops to prepare for food growing in our plot in the Regent Park community garden.

Working to End Human Trafficking

By Safia Hirsi

The TNG Women's Program is an active member of the Toronto Counter Human Trafficking Network (TCHTN), a grassroots community network of organizations and individuals across the Greater Toronto Area. TCHTN reflects the rich racial and cultural diversity of Toronto's communities and works collaboratively to address critical social issues. We devise strategies to end human trafficking and strengthen community responses to violence and abuse.

The Women's Program raises awareness about human trafficking, educating parents and families about prevention and warning signs, providing information on available community supports and addressing intimate partner violence and gender based violence.

At our recent TCHTN meeting, the focus was a demonstration of the Find help 211 Victim Support Directory. The directory connects people in Ontario to essential services for those experiencing violence and abuse, including Crisis support services, 24/7 helplines, Emergency shelters, Counselling and trauma support programs, Legal and community-based assistance

The group successfully advocated to have the CN Tower lit up in blue on National Human Trafficking Awareness Day on February 22, 2026. The lit up tower marked the serious issue problem of human trafficking. This initiative aims to raise awareness and show solidarity with survivors. It highlights the serious human rights violations that occur with human trafficking.



Acting Together to Improve the Canada Disability Benefit



Residents with disabilities at 10 Gower Street (above) met with Helen Armstrong and TNG Community Programs Worker Nana Shamba (centre of photo) on March 23, 2026. Together they wrote a letter to their Member of Parliament Nathaniel Erskine-Smith to urge him to take action within federal parliament on the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). The program provides just \$200 a month, leaving many recipients still unable to cover food, medication and basic living costs. Of 1.5 million Canadians with disabilities living in poverty, only 25,000 are expected to be lifted out by 2034 through the new benefit. One person discussed how they must travel around the city to food banks and meals despite being on ODSP and receiving the CDB. They are asking that the benefit be doubled at least, and that people not have to be in receipt of the Disability Tax Credit to qualify for the CDB.

ACTION ALERT: SAVE PUBLIC HEALTH CARE



CODE BLUE

SAVE PUBLIC HEALTH CARE BEFORE IT FLATLINES



28

MAY
2026

RALLY AT
UNION
STATION

12 PM

TELL DOUG FORD:
STOP PRIVATIZATION!

HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE
NOT FOR PROFIT!

STAY
TUNED:

