

Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service System Planning Forum

Date and time: July 12, 2023; 10:00am – 12:00pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81540086227>

1. SSHA Items and Updates

- **Shelter Flow Data** – Trish Lenz, Manager, Coordinated Access

Shelter system Flow Data for May can be accessed through the City's website [Shelter System Flow Data – City of Toronto](#). The data for June will be on the City's website on Monday July 17.

- Shelter System Inflow in **May, 2023:1,466**
- There were **1132** newly identified people experiencing homelessness in our shelter system for the first time, and **704** people moved from shelter to permanent housing. Most discharges were to private market housing.
- Of the newly identified people, **765** were refugees.
- *Refer to the slide deck for more detail*
 - Q Numbers of active homelessness has gone down by 3 % is that because of the reduced number or capacity of shelter beds?
 - A would have to dig into the information to find out.
 - Q Is there is a relationship between COHB closing down and the increase in the number of encampments?
 - A We have not yet gone through the data enough to answer that fully.
 - Q 40 people have passed in the last 3 months. Are we counting the number of people who have passed away who were in the shelters?
 - A We will check with how it is reported in SMIS – it might not be recorded in the discharge the data.
 - Q At the service commemorating those who have passed away who were homeless, only 7 people on the list of names being acknowledged had names. The rest were John Doe or Jane Doe. Is there a way that the City could provide initials of the individuals without invading privacy so that we can humanized the individuals in this process.
 - A Will take that back and see how we can see if we can do something to identify. We certainly release information in a disaggregated form. Right now we share it on a quarterly basis. We are working with our partners in TPH to share information to see how it lines up with the way that they track the information.
 - Q The breakdown for outflow is not on the City's website. Can you disseminate this info? Is there any plan to put it on the website?
 - For now is for us to send it out through this group. Easiest and quickest way is through this group. The information in the deck will be distributed through email and then posted on the TAEH website.

• Shelter System Updates – Joseph Stalteri, Director, Service Planning and Integrity

Overview

- Introducing Sue Goodfellow – she will provide the update on the Heat Relief work she is doing.
- Refugee claimants in the system – the deputy mayor made an announcement and press release related on the system pressure that we are all experiencing with the surge of refugee claimants looking to access the shelter system. We are struggling with how to manage this in terms of our engagement with our federal colleagues. We are at capacity in our shelter system. We are not getting the kind of traction that we are hoping to get politically. We are hoping now that we have a new mayor that the federal government may be able to pay attention. There is a lot of support locally at this point. . The number of refugees in this system has exceeded 3100.
- There have been a number of meetings since the Mayor Elect has come into office. Many of you have been in the meetings with me.
 - Q We understand the situation the city is in and that the city needs more money. The city makes some categorical statements that were not serving homeless refugees. While we do this advocacy with the federal government – we should also add that we are doing everything we can. Drawing that line in the sand is not good politics.
 - A It is not that the city is not serving refugees. We have a system set up to serve homeless refugees. We have communicated that through communications that we do it. We don't have the capacity to do more than what we have already set up to do. In fact we are doing more to fund what we provide. Until recently the federal government was funding an increase but then they stopped that.
 - Q Refugees are being used as pawns in the political strategy its shameful. All the community agencies are still serving even though they are not funded to do this.
 - These refugees don't know how to use our systems and they will end up with no status which will make things worse. I have never seen anything like this. There needs to be a long term strategy for this. We are working in our own capacity politically to the feds to do something. This needs an emergency response. This is an emergency. This looks really bad on the city. Hopefully Mayor elect Chow will take the ball and run with this. The city looks really bad.
 - A We hear you and we appreciate all the work that you have been doing. Especially around this issue in particular. We need to work together to bring this to a resolution. We can't continue to do this and we need a strategy to help solve this issue. What is needed is space and funding for space. Even with an emergency response we need space. The financial situation the city is in is also at play.
 - Q On the ground – the responses are limited and the communication is disjointed. What can be done right now in terms of information sharing? Can there be more information with the people who are camped out of 129 Peter Street? Its frightening for people - we are trying to mobilise to get some health

care support for the people who are living outside of 129 Peter Street. Wanted to flag that these are some immediate and short term that can be fixed tomorrow.

- A That is helpful to hear that and helpful to know what you are seeing and hearing. As of yesterday there was a tent set up outside 129 Peter Street to help with communication and to respond to this break in communication. There are staff there who are providing information as well as pamphlets.
- We are also trying to use what we learned from Dufferin Grove and apply that model to the encampments in Allen Gardens.

- Q How about contacting the Out Of the Cold to reopen their spaces for the summer?
- A We have been looking at the Out Of the Cold program results to adapt it for this.

Update from Sue Goodfellow on Heat Relief Strategy

During the period of May 15 – Sept 30 the Heat Relief system is activated.

If daytime temperatures are 30 degrees or warmer – and evening 25 degrees with humidex at 40 the system is activated.

We are calling it a heat relief strategy to differentiate it from the cooling centre system and programs. We have not had cooling centres for at least a year.

During Covid we have public space with AC like libraries and community centres and splash pads.

Go to environment Canada for heat alerts. <https://ecalertme.weather.gc.ca/>

There are three areas that we are looking at as part of the heat strategy:

1. Heat as described before
2. Air quality
3. Heavy rain. –staff do outreach in parks and ravines near flood plans. E.g. Don Valley encampments.

SSHA does following – if there is a heat warning or air quality – we activate a banner alert in the SMIS system with the info that you need for frontline staff when they log in.

We provide information and instructions for staff such as asking shelters to be a bit more relaxed on discharge for safety issues.

Streets to homes has a similar summer response as to winter response i.e. handing out water, and giving people addresses of where to go to cool down.

- Q More of a comment – there is no maximum temperature bylaw - this affects people who live in rooming houses on the top floor. In addition renters also get charged extra to get an air conditioner.

- Q There needs to be better education about how to keep cool. The city does not have strong by laws around heat measures. Concerned that we do not have a robust heat strategy that is based in human rights i.e. being able to live in a place where you can't be too hot.
- A We will work on it. We have a new meeting set up with TPH and we will find a pathway to the right set of people who can work on it there.

- Q Comment at St Mikes, we did not have anywhere to discharge people during the heat and poor air quality days. There is a carceral approach to discharging people during heat waves.
- Q Comment Clients have commented that although they often go into a mall to cool off, if they have lots of backpacks, they feel like they have a target on their back. It seems that there is increased surveillance by people who are working there.

Housing Secretariat Items and Updates

• COHB Renewal Strategy Update - Yanka McKie, Megan Brown and Richard Marshall

Overview

- Portable housing benefit to assist with rental costs in the private housing market. The benefit is tied to the household and can be used to help pay rent anywhere in Ontario
- Provincial Federal program - part of the National Housing Strategy
- Program launched on April 1, 2020
- The COHB program funding ends on March 31, 2029
- Recipients must be removed from the Centralized Waiting List

Year 1 (2020-2021)	\$7.75M	1,162
Year 2 (2021-2022)	\$2.3M	292
Year 3 (2022-2023)	\$12.25M	Provincial forecast 900 – 1,200 Actual 2,035
Year 4 (2023-2024)	\$9.48M	Provincial forecast 650 – 800 Actual 960

Year 3 shelter relief stream was introduced. Qualifications are

- 3 months of homelessness
- Referred by an approved community partner
- Secured a rental tenancy

Renewal process.

- By June 30, 87% renewed. Almost 70% renew without supports
- Demonstrates that the initiatives we have taken have improved outcomes have worked.
- On June 6 we had a shelter site lead check in where we completed training and overnight we saw an 8% increase in renewals.
- Each percentage increase can be attributed to 16 HH.
- ODSP began reaching out to their clients last week which will also improve the completion of renewals.

Program evaluation

- Starting at the end of Year 4 of the COHB program implementation, the HS will collect and analyze COHB applicant and recipient outcome data to assess the impact of the program.
- Areas of focus for evaluation will include:
 - adequacy of the benefit
 - contributions to housing stability
 - equitable access to the benefit
 - system-level impacts
- The evaluation will be informed by program data and outcomes analysis, community partner surveys and a business process review

Advocacy

- Sometimes these program and advocacy is complicated because of different orders of government in terms of having to coordinated responses.
- We have had some response from the provincial govt.
- THAB will end on March 31 2024
- Behind the scenes we have been working with the province to extend the THAB program
 - Q Why would you not track the people who are working. Why only OW and ODSP – would they need less COHB to fill the gap.
 - A – The province runs the renewal altogether. All recipients have to go through the renewal process. We flagged OW and ODSP because we are able to coordinate with ODSP and OW. When we had originally reached out to the clients.
 - Q – Appreciate the outreach being done around renewal. Understand the administration of the taxes is a provincial requirement. There needs to be this discussion with the government about this requirement.
 - Q. How many people are receiving THAB?
 - there are about 5000 HH.

Community Update

• Everyday Connect Portal – Melody Li, Homeless Connect Toronto

Overview

- Funded by Trillium.
- Mobile and desktop platform to help ensure that individuals and needs are better connected.
- Curated direct referral hub for supports in Toronto.
- In the prototype stage right now but will be launched soon.
- Addresses the problem of trying to find supports for homeless people as the resource lists are fragmented and not up to date. Have to look up each support separately and then find the resource.
- We wanted to find a year round connection so that people can be linked quickly. The platform is for workers, peer supporters, as well as the individual so that we don't lose the personal touch when accessing supports.

- How is it different from 211? A lot of onus is on the user to figure out how to make contact. There is not tracking mechanism that shows you how to take an action and that can keep a record of the outreach efforts you made. We want the provider to respond back to the request to help close the information loop for the service.
- Organizations that are participating in this site, have committed to providing referral information including contact information.
- This plat form also gives the person receiving the info extra information to help them figure out how to get to an appointment and also what to expect etc
- They can also track referrals. Get closer to program outcomes that we are trying to achieve.
- portal@hctoronto.org is the website when it goes live
 - Q Comment: I can see how this website is probably most applicable for services that are not prescribed by funders. Sometime people just can't take referrals from another agency.
 - For more generalized referral process this could be a more helpful tool for people who need services.
 - I could see some program areas for covenant house.
 - Q What is the process to get involved?-
 - A reach out to portal@hctoronto.org to get more info.
 - Q is there a section for newcomers?
 - A I think we could put a section on the front page titled something like "need help now?"– that would be helpful for newcomers.

TAEH Items and Updates

- **TAEH Working Groups Update – Savhanna Wilson**
- **Supportive Housing Growth Plan Update – Savhanna Wilson**

Will provide the updates in September.

Other Business

- August break – no THHSP Forum

Next Meeting:

Wednesday September 13, 2023

10:00am – Noon

Questions from the Chat.

Paul Bruce (Cota) to Everyone 10:35 AM

Have there been any moves to convert abundant vacant commercial space to affordable housing and/or emergency shelter?

Susan bender, she/her, TDIN to Everyone 10:38 AM

it was very confusing messaging that suggested people were being asked their status and then may even be denied shelter space based on this and referred elsewhere to IRCCshelters. agree with mark, very problematic messaging.

david.reycraft to Everyone 10:42 AM

Mayor Chow has begun the discussion about converting vacant commercial space to housing.

Marilyn Wilcoxon to Everyone 10:47 AM

How about contacting the Out Of The Cold to reopen their spaces for the summer?
How about moving the encampments to the Portlands?

Jesse Jenkinson (MAP/SMH) 10:48 AM

I'd add that many service providers in the meeting with Mayor Chow were offering that they can help with staffing, as we know that is a major issue at the moment as well.

Jesse Jenkinson MAP

I do understand that this is all complicated, but I just want to flag that we really do need places where people can go who are on the streets or encampments. Libraries, community centres, etc are OK but its really not enough. Other cities activate cooling centers. We really do need some of these spaces so people have a place to go to escape. In the ED at St. Michaels during the poor air quality we had nowhere to send people. Some of the spaces on the City's map aren't drop-in spaces anymore, such as the respite down near the lake.

Marianne Kozinets (she/her) 10:58 AM

What about overnight assistance and adequate indoor space where people won't be followed by security and kicked out (which has been identified by people with lived experience trying to utilize some of these spaces, such as malls and splash pads)?

veronica snooks she/her 11:27 AM

someone I know was afraid to come off the housing list to get cohb because she felt that if cohb runs out her housing situation would end up bad in the long run..especially as she ages..