

Implementation of the Final Report of the Review of the Use of Motels

(City Council on November 23, 24 and 25, 1999, amended this Clause by adding thereto the following:

“It is further recommended that:

- (1) the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services be requested to:
 - (a) review potential site locations suitable for family shelters with the intent of reducing the use of motels on Kingston Road based on a fair share principle, and report thereon to the Community Services Committee, through the Advisory Committee on Emergency Shelter Sites; and*
 - (b) develop a contingency plan for submission to the Community Services Committee, as soon as possible, taking into consideration:
 - (i) the possibility of no funding being received from the other levels of government; and*
 - (ii) the disposition of the \$4.0 million approved for the construction of a new family shelter referred to in the report dated October 20, 1999, from the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services; and***
- (2) the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer be requested to submit a report to the Community Services Committee on the possibility of an entire family being sponsored and receiving a tax receipt for this sponsorship.”)*

The Community Services Committee recommends:

- (1) the adoption of the report dated October 20, 1999, from the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services; and further that, upon adoption by City Council, the clause be forwarded to the Budget Advisory Committee for consideration of the funding aspects during the 2000 Capital Budget process; and**
- (2) that the Councillors for Scarborough Highland Creek and Scarborough Bluffs be charged with the task of meeting with the appropriate Federal and Provincial Ministers, in order to secure the funding necessary to implement the recommendations contained in the aforementioned report of the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services, and be requested to report thereon to the Community Services Committee on their progress no later than March 9, 2000.**

The Community Services Committee, reports for the information of Council, having deferred consideration of the following motion by Councillor Moeser, pending receipt of the reports requested from the Councillors for Scarborough Highland Creek and Scarborough Bluffs and the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services:

“That the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services be requested to report to the Community Services Committee within six months on:

- (a) an action plan on phasing out motels along Kingston Road, in particular:
 - (1) the number of motels to be phased out per year and the timing of same; and
 - (2) a process to identify and formalize the locations of the shelters across the City of Toronto based on a fair share process and, where possible, utilizing City-owned land to implement this initiative; and
- (b) the outcome of discussions with the Federal and Provincial Governments.”

The Community Services Committee submits the following report (October 20, 1999) from the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services:

Purpose:

To provide the Community Services Committee with an update on the City’s progress in implementing the recommendations of the Final Report of the Review of the Use of Motels.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Provincial cost-sharing will be sought for a new family shelter at a total cost of \$8 million. Toronto Hostel Services has requested \$4 million over the next three years in the year 2000 budget as the City’s share of the capital cost for this new shelter.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) Toronto Hostel Services be authorized to include funding of \$8 million gross, \$4 million net, for the construction of a new family shelter in its capital budget submission, for review as part of the year 2000 budget process;
- (2) this report be forwarded to the provincial Ministers of Community and Social Services and Municipal Affairs and Housing, the federal Ministers of Citizenship and Immigration, Public Works and Government Services, Human Resources Development, the Prime Minister Appointed Federal Coordinator on Homelessness, the Chair of the

Toronto District School Board and the Chair of the Toronto Catholic District School Board for their response;

- (3) staff report back to the Community Services Committee when these responses are received; and
- (4) the appropriate City officials be authorized to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Community and Neighbourhood Services report, “A Review of the Use of Motels for Homeless Families” (May 19, 1998), recommended a review of the practice of using motels to shelter homeless families. A review was necessary for two reasons: to establish a policy context for this key component of the family shelter system, and to address the long-standing concerns of residents in the wards of Scarborough Bluffs and Scarborough Highland Creek.

A Steering Committee comprised of the four City Councillors from the Wards of Scarborough Bluffs and Scarborough Highland Creek, and Councillors Raymond Cho and Olivia Chow from the Community and Neighbourhood Services Committee was established in July of 1998. The Steering Committee consulted through the fall of 1998 with local residents, social agencies, community groups, faith communities, and local schools. The Steering Committee then considered options to address the issues raised during the review through the winter and spring of 1999.

A report from the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services, the “Final Report of the Review of the Use of Motels”, was adopted at the April 22, 1999, meeting of the Community and Neighbourhood Services Committee and was approved by Council on May 11 and 12, 1999.

Comments:

Part 1: Background:

- (1) History of the Use of Motels:

The use of motels to accommodate homeless families was first authorized by the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto in 1986. The family shelter system was full and families could not be accommodated in dormitory settings, as is the case for single adult men and women. Motels offered a reasonable alternative because of their small scale, proximity to residential neighbourhoods and schools, and the relative privacy they provide homeless families. The use of motels for family shelter was initially intended as a short-term use to respond to sudden changes in family shelter admissions. As demand for family shelter grew, and options for new shelter capacity were limited, reliance on motels increased as well.

Close to half of all family shelter capacity is located along Kingston Road. In 1997, for the first time, the City was forced to use motels outside of Toronto to accommodate homeless families. Approximately 800 individuals are accommodated in motels along Kingston Road, 352

individuals are accommodated in the provincially-funded assaulted women's sector, 1,200 are accommodated in City-run or purchased hostel services, and an additional 200 individuals are accommodated in motels outside of the City. The family shelter system is currently at capacity with new demand being met through the motel program outside of the City of Toronto.

(2) Key Findings of the Review:

The review considered the impact of the concentration of homeless families in motels on the local community, local schools and community-based services. The review also considered the impact of using motels as family shelter on homeless families themselves.

The Steering Committee found that several local public schools experience high levels of student turnover as the result of admissions from the motel program. In some instances, turnover hovers at close to one-third of a particular school's total student population. This level of turnover places strain on administrative and teaching resources and also creates challenges related to the transition of students who are homeless in and out of the classroom. In addition, local schools must respond to the complex needs of refugee children who represent a smaller, but significant part of the motel program.

The majority of families accommodated in the family shelter system stay between two weeks and four months. Seventy-six percent of all the homeless families in the emergency shelter system are single parent households, most of which are led by women. In contrast, only 20 percent of families accommodated in the motel program are single parent households. This is the result of deliberate efforts on the part of Toronto Hostel Services to place single parent families in communal shelters where they will be less isolated and have more immediate access to additional supports.

Some families initially prefer the added privacy of the motel program. Over time, however, it becomes increasingly difficult for parents and children to live in one room with all of their belongings and little opportunity for privacy from one another. Although shopping, services, schools and transportation are nearby, some parents worry about the lack of play and recreation space at some of the motels.

Some community members who participated in the public consultations as part of the review made it clear that the motels themselves represent a visible sign of a community under stress. These individuals believe the motels, whether or not they are used as homeless shelter, are a negative impact in the local community.

Community-based service providers and some local residents are concerned about the capacity of the community to meet diverse and complex needs in the context of growing poverty, limited housing options, and constrained health and social service capacities.

(3) Review Recommendations:

The review concluded that the concentration of family shelter along Kingston Road was not sustainable. At the same time, the review acknowledged that with demand for family shelter

continuing to grow and with a 98 percent capacity rate in the family shelter system, eliminating beds from the motel program is a major challenge for the City of Toronto.

The motel program forms a critical component of the family shelter system. As such reducing concentration of family shelter along Kingston Road cannot be addressed without resolving the system-wide issues related to family shelter capacity. These issues have been identified in Appendix A along with the City's efforts to respond. The most pressing challenge the system faces is anticipated growth in demand of 10 percent, or 180 beds per year.

Replacing beds lost through the elimination of the motel program will require an estimated \$6.6 million per year for five years in new shelter construction and additional operating costs. This does not include City costs to meet projected growth in demand. Funding sources for a capital program of this magnitude are limited given the City's current fiscal constraints and the absence of a provincial program for capital construction of emergency shelters. Even with the required capital funding, the development of new family shelters is a multi-year process.

To address these conflicting realities, the review recommended the City seek a partnership with the Provincial Government to provide the capital funding required to phase-out the use of motels over a three to five-year period. Because a phase out of the motels is a long-term objective, the review recommended that in the interim, the accountability of the motel program be enhanced through the development of new standards and a new contract management process. In addition, the review recommended the City of Toronto take a leadership role in working with the education sector and other service sectors to better plan our response to homeless families and to reduce strain on community resources.

Finally, the review reinforced the findings of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force that federal and provincial action is required to find long-term solutions to homelessness in Toronto. In particular, the review identified the need for the Federal Government to address the needs of newcomers to Canada and the need for both the Provincial and Federal Governments to address inadequate housing and income as critical causes of homelessness. This is particularly relevant to efforts to resolve family homelessness because eviction is one of the most common reasons that families seek emergency shelter.

Part 2: Implementing the Review of the Use of Motels:

Although long-term solutions that prevent homelessness are critical to stem the flow of newly homeless families into the emergency shelter system, new shelter construction will be required to address the absolute shortfall in family shelter capacity. The family shelter system has no room to grow to respond to increasing demand, nor does it have the capacity to absorb beds lost through the phase-out of the use of motels. The City of Toronto is willing to do its part to address both long-term solutions to homelessness and immediate needs for new family shelter capacity, but solutions cannot be found without provincial and federal support.

(1) Family Shelter Expansion Requirements:

To phase-out the use of motels, approximately 123 people must be relocated from motels to new shelter locations each year for five years at an estimated cost of \$6.6 million per year. Because a phase-out plan would be implemented in the context of growing demand for family shelter, the City would also have to add an estimated 180 beds per year at a cost of \$9 million each year.

In addition, the City will need to phase-out the approximately 200 beds being contracted at motels outside of the City. This is estimated at a one-time cost of \$10 million, however, this cost is likely to increase since motels outside of the City currently provide the only option for new families entering the family shelter system.

Using motels outside of the City creates a number of challenges related to the co-ordination of services across different municipal boundaries. From an operational and service delivery perspective it would make most sense to phase-out the use of out of town motels prior to phasing out motels along Kingston Road. Given the long-standing concerns of local Councillors and residents in the Wards of Scarborough Bluffs and Scarborough Highland Creek, we do not believe this is an option at this time. The use of motels along Kingston Road will remain a first priority for phase-out.

(2) City Proposal to the Provincial Government:

We propose that the Provincial Government partner with the City to address the critical needs of homeless families in the following ways:

- (a) Immediately expand the capacity of the provincially funded and administered assaulted women's sector by 380 beds. We conservatively estimate this number of women is inappropriately accommodated in the City's family shelter system because of insufficient capacity in the assaulted women's sector. Expanding the assaulted women's system will relieve pressure on the family shelter system as a whole, and ensure women and children who have experienced violence receive the specialized supports they need.
- (b) Partner with the City on a 50:50 cost-shared basis for the capital costs of a new family shelter to be directly operated by the City of Toronto. Toronto Hostel Services has identified the need for \$4 million over the next three years as the City's share of this 160-bed project.
- (c) Negotiate a capital construction plan to relocate 123 individuals per year from motels along Kingston Road and to accommodate projected growth in demand for family shelter.

The City has also asked the Federal Government to assume the full costs of emergency shelter provided to refugee claimants. We estimate that approximately 450 refugee claimants are accommodated in the emergency shelter system on any given night.

(3) Phase-out Planning:

In anticipation of a provincial partnership to phase-out of the use of motels, staff have reviewed the profile and service needs of homeless families to determine which families would most

benefit from relocation to new shelter facilities. We have developed a set of principles which will guide the City's phase-out planning. Our principles are to:

- (a) meet the needs of families and children in the most appropriate environment possible;
- (b) ensure appropriate standards and services;
- (c) enhance accountability in the motel program;
- (d) reduce the impact on local schools and local communities;
- (e) ensure school-age children who are homeless do not experience further school disruption;
- (f) work in partnership with the school board and local schools; and
- (g) keep families who are homeless and local communities informed of our plans.

Our work to date has demonstrated that single-parent families experience the most challenges when they are accommodated in motels. Single parents must deal with the daily stresses of work, children and family without the economic or social support of a spouse or partner. This reality is exacerbated for single parent families who are homeless. The isolation of living in a motel room, with limited space for children to play, or to seek the support of others is particularly difficult. Many single parent families are also seeking emergency shelter because they are victims of abuse/violence. For these women, motels do not provide adequate safety, security or support. As a result, our first priority will be to relocate the 20 percent of single parent families accommodated in the motel program.

As new shelter locations are developed, families will be moved from motels on the basis of our phase-out criteria. Our preference is to develop new family shelters that balance the need for sufficient size to achieve economies of scale with the need to integrate successfully in local communities. These service objectives will be challenging given limited options for new shelter locations, growth in demand for family shelter, and community expectations for rapid reductions in concentration along Kingston Road.

Planning for a phase-out of the motels will be a complex process in which many needs must be balanced. The City must ensure that families are accommodated in the most appropriate environment possible while minimizing impacts on local schools and providing as much stability as possible to children who are homeless. Consulting with local school boards and principals will be critical throughout the planning process.

(4) Developing Standards for Motels:

Since the review of the use of motels was completed, City staff has reviewed each of the motels in the motel program on the basis of a comprehensive set of more than 50 criteria. These include the size and quality of the rooms, the quality of the amenities and furnishings, the availability of play space and communal kitchens, and compliance with health and safety requirements. Where motels have been deficient, the information has been shared with motel owners with regular follow up to secure improvements and enhancements.

Using this information as a baseline, staff developed a set of standards appropriate to the use of motels. Developing a set of standards has created an opportunity for staff to do a comprehensive accounting of the current program, to clarify our expectations with motel owners and to seek improvements where necessary.

Our work to develop standards has been guided by our need to balance the best interests of homeless families and local communities with our goal of phasing-out motels within five years. As a result, we have been careful to avoid recommending extensive enhancements in motel properties that might commit the City to those properties over the long term. Accordingly, this first phase of work has placed priority on health and safety issues.

(5) Enhancing Compliance:

The next phase of our work in this area will focus on enhancing compliance activities in the motel program. A number of City departments, including Public Health, Planning, Buildings and Inspections, and the Fire Department are involved in monitoring conditions at motels. Toronto Hostel Services will take the lead to formalize and enhance collaboration and communication between these departments. This will ensure that when issues arise at motel properties, City departments can work collaboratively to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.

In addition, a new contract management process will be established. The contract management process will provide an opportunity to inform motel owners of the City's new expectations and to give owners a time frame to adjust their activities if required. Our goal is to have a systematic and transparent process based on the newly developed motel standards for issuing, reviewing and cancelling contracts with motel owners. The contract management process will require owners to demonstrate their suitability for participating in the motel program and to demonstrate that they have complied with appropriate regulations and standards. As part of the contract management process, the City will dedicate staff to:

- (a) make periodic visits to motels with the purpose of reviewing standards;
- (b) follow up with operators and determine appropriate time tables for remedial action;
- (c) bring forward recurring issues or problems that may require a change in operating policy or procedure; and
- (d) liaise with relevant departments and regulatory bodies on standards and compliance.

Funding for an additional FTE has been included as part of the Toronto Hostel Services year 2000 budget request to perform this function.

(6) Implementation Costs:

The development of a new family shelter for 160 individuals has been estimated at a total cost of \$8 million over three years. Provincial cost-sharing on a 50:50 basis will be requested. Toronto

Hostel Services has requested \$4 million in capital funding over three years through the regular budget process. The capital costs for this project have been broken down as follows:

Year	City of Toronto	Provincial Government	Total
2000	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 500,000.00
2001	3,000,000.00	3,000,000.00	6,000,000.00
2002	750,000.00	750,000.00	1,500,000.00

Funding for an additional FTE has also been requested in Toronto Hostel Services year 2000 budget for the motel monitoring and compliance component of the implementation plan.

In addition, to phase-out the use of motels, an estimated \$6.6 million per year will be required over five years. The City will request a provincial partnership to meet the capital costs of phasing-out the motels, as well as the cost of adding new beds to meet increasing demand.

Part 3: Addressing Concerns in the Education Sector:

(1) Review Findings:

The review of the use of motels found that some schools along Kingston Road are significantly affected by high enrolments from the motel program. Parents are concerned that teacher time and resources are drained by the flow of new students entering and leaving the classroom, and by the needs of newcomer children.

Children who are homeless require additional support to manage transitions to new school environments. They also need support to address the impact of interrupted schooling. In addition, a child's interrupted schooling has implications for the development of curriculum, the student assessment process and the transfer of student records.

Our experience working with local schools has demonstrated a number of approaches that respond to these realities. Dedicating staffing resources to provide additional support to children who are homeless reduces demand on classroom teachers and improves the educational experience of homeless children. Educators or children's counselling professionals can provide this additional support through programs that maximize the homeless child's integration into the school setting. Settlement workers can provide specialized counselling support directly in the school setting to newcomer children as they adapt to life in Canada.

Daily linkage between the shelter and the school is also critical. The placement of shelter staff in school settings provides additional support and advice to the classroom teacher and other service providers. Shelter staff provide a case-management function to ensure services to children are as seamless as possible and can facilitate the relationship between teacher and parent if required. Shelter staff also support special programs to provide children living in shelters with appropriate support, space and resources to complete homework and participate in school activities and projects.

(2) City Response:

The City of Toronto has written to the provincial Minister of Community and Social Services to request funding for children's counsellors in schools with high enrolments from the emergency shelter system. We were pleased to learn that Earlscourt Child and Family Services has received one year funding to provide such a program at Galloway Public School. We have urged the Minister to expand funding for such programs to make them a permanent part of the Provincial Government's response to children who are homeless. The City has also supported the Federal Government's pilot program to place settlement workers in local schools in Toronto. We have urged the Federal Government to extend the program beyond one year and to ensure that refugee claimant children are eligible to participate.

In addition, the City of Toronto has designated staff to work in each of the public schools attended by children living in motels. An additional staff has been assigned to liaise with secondary schools to address the needs of adolescents living with their families in motels. Toronto Hostel Services will continue to provide homework clubs and other social and recreational programs for children living in motels and will continue to work closely with local principals, school councils and parents.

(3) Collaboration with Local School Boards:

On October 4, 1999, Councillor Duguid, Chair of the Community Services Committee, and Councillor Moeser, Chair of the Steering Committee to Review the Use of Motels, met with the Chairs of the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board to consider options to improve supports to schools in the Kingston Road area.

They discussed the findings of the motel review and the actions taken by the City of Toronto to implement the review recommendations. In particular, they discussed how they could build on existing school-City partnerships to enhance the quality of education for children who are homeless and to minimize impacts for local communities. They agreed that City and school board staff would continue to meet to identify service priorities and options for additional funding.

Despite an eagerness to collaborate, concern about the sustainability of existing funding and service supports, let alone service expansion was a key topic of discussion. Although the Toronto District School Board and the City of Toronto have enhanced supports to schools with high enrolments from emergency shelters, parents remain concerned that these enhancements do not fully meet student needs. Now existing school board funding to these schools is threatened by the new provincial education funding formula. In addition, the City of Toronto is constrained by provincial funding per diems that do not reflect the costs of providing critical supports to children or to local schools.

The City and local school boards cannot resolve these issues without provincial and federal involvement. They have agreed to jointly invite provincial and federal representatives to a meeting prior to the next federal and provincial budgets. They will seek additional provincial funding to enhance teacher and classroom resources and will seek federal funding to assist schools in meeting the needs of refugee claimant children.

Conclusions:

The motel program forms a critical component of the family shelter system. As such, reducing the concentration of family shelter along Kingston Road cannot be addressed without resolving system-wide issues related to family shelter capacity. The City of Toronto is willing to do its part to address both long-term solutions to homelessness and the immediate need for new family shelter capacity, however, the City cannot resolve these issues on its own.

For this reason, the City is seeking 50:50 provincial cost-sharing for the construction of a new family shelter. In addition, a provincial partnership will be sought to address the capital costs of a phase-out of the motels. These costs have been estimated at \$6.6 million per year for five years. The City of Toronto has also asked the Provincial Government to increase the assaulted women's system by 380 beds. This is the number of women estimated to be inappropriately accommodated in the City's family shelter system because the assaulted women's system is full. The Federal Government has been asked to fully assume the costs of the estimated 450 refugee claimants accommodated in the emergency shelter system each night.

Phasing-out the use of motels and addressing the need for additional family shelter capacity is a long-term objective that will require federal and provincial participation. In the interim, the City is enhancing the accountability of the motel program to clarify City expectations of motel owners and improve the responsiveness of the motel program to homeless families and local communities. A new set of standards for motels has already been developed and a new contract management and compliance process will be initiated in the spring of 2000. In addition, the City is taking a leadership role to work with the education and other service sectors to improve responsiveness to homeless families and reduce stress on local communities.

Contact:

Joanne Campbell – 392-7885
General Manager, Shelter Housing and Support

List of Attachments:

Appendix A: Challenges for the Family Shelter System

Appendix A Challenges for the Family Shelter System

(1) Increasing Vulnerability for Families:

Between 1992 and 1997, demand for family shelter grew by 123 percent. The recent report by the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force found that:

“The growth in family homelessness in Toronto is the result of a number of factors: the increasing rate and depth of poverty, a changing labour market, and a shortage of affordable housing. Additional pressure such as cuts to social assistance, an ever-tightening rental market and cuts to social programs put many families at risk.”

Forty-eight per cent of the households on the current social housing waiting list in Toronto are families. This waiting list now includes 31,000 children. Because affordable private rental housing options for families are so limited, and because new social housing is not being constructed, many families are now on waiting lists so long they have little hope of securing the housing they need.

Many of these families contribute significant shares of their income to pay for their housing. The Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force found that approximately 35,000 families in rental units are paying more than 50 percent of their income on shelter. When large amounts of income like this are directed to housing costs even small increases in rent, or changes in other life circumstances can lead to housing instability, and for some homelessness. These statistics are alarming and suggest that in addition to those families already living in the emergency shelter system, substantial numbers of families are living in precarious circumstances and are at-risk of homelessness.

(2) Managing Growth in Emergency Shelter:

The emergency shelter system is a system of last resort. As such its primary mandate must be the provision of shelter for those who find themselves without housing. While Toronto Hostel Services continues to respond to growth in demand for shelter, opportunities to assist people prior to their loss of housing and to move people more quickly back into the community have also been sought.

In 1998, Toronto Hostel Services established a centralized in-take system for families. Centralized telephone in-take is appropriate for families because most families access the emergency shelter system by phone. Toronto Hostel Services had also found that many families contact the shelter system prior to becoming literally homeless. The centralized in-take provided an obvious opportunity to provide families with advice and referral on a range of issues to help prevent unnecessary eviction, secure permanent housing, or access other benefits and supports to maintain housing stability. In September, 418 individuals were referred to emergency shelters and 75 individuals were referred to other services and supports. Eviction and abuse remain the highest reason for service with the majority of families being single parent, female-led.

In addition, Toronto Hostel Services has developed two programs which assist families or individuals who wish to relocate from Toronto to other communities where they may have more affordable housing options. Project Going Home is targeted to people in the emergency shelter system that have recently moved to Toronto from other places in Ontario and Canada. The program is voluntary and provides financial support to those who wish to return to their home community. Between April and December 1999, Project Going Home estimates it will assist 600 individuals to return to their home community. Housing Contacts helps to locate affordable housing and other supports in communities outside of Toronto where the cost of living is more affordable. Between January 1998 and June 1999, 1,065 individuals in the family shelter system were assisted through this program.

Toronto Hostel Services has also requested provincial funding for additional housing counsellors to work directly in the emergency shelter system. Housing counsellors will help people living in shelters to find permanent housing by working with existing networks of community-based service providers. This has been identified as a critical component of successful efforts to move individuals from shelters to permanent, stable housing. Once individuals have moved from the shelter and back into the community, housing counsellors will continue to do some follow up to ensure housing stability is maintained.

To improve the planning and development process for new emergency shelter sites, a Council committee has been established to review the process for site selection and facilitate the development of shelter sites on a more equitable basis City-wide. The Committee has established a protocol for community notification and consultation when new shelter sites are identified. Planning staff are working to facilitate the development of emergency shelter in other parts of the City, but current zoning by-laws and planning processes make new shelter development difficult.

(3) Enhancing Prevention Initiatives:

The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force documented the critical role of the Federal and Provincial Governments in preventing homelessness through affordable housing programs and the provision of adequate income supports. Without action to address the housing and income needs of Ontarians, new families will continue to enter the emergency shelter system as quickly as we are able to help families move out.

The City continues its focus on implementing the municipal recommendations contained in the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force and continues to urge the Province and the Federal Government to act on their respective responsibilities.

The key components of the City's prevention program are as follows:

- (a) Eviction Prevention and Tenant Services;
- (b) Rent Bank for Women and Children;
- (c) Housing Help;
- (d) Shelter Fund; and
- (e) Affordable Housing Strategy.

The Shelter Housing and Support Division continues to develop opportunities for the City to play a role in preventing evictions and providing support to tenants. Tenants have been identified by the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force as a group, which is at-risk of homelessness because of declining income levels and rising rents. An eviction prevention program was approved by Council last year and includes an education component to inform landlords, tenants and other community agencies about changes in eviction procedures as the result of the new Tenant Protection Act. The program also includes funding to a telephone hotline service to provide immediate help and information, and hands on mediation to resolve disputes before they lead to eviction. A number of reports related to eviction and tenant services are before the

Committee and identify further areas of research and action that the City may undertake to further prevent unnecessary evictions and to provide support to tenants.

A rent bank pilot project for women and children at-risk of losing their housing was initiated in 1998. In 1999, the program was expanded as part of the City's response to the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. Research in the United States demonstrates that the average rent bank grant under some programs is half the cost of a month's stay in a homeless shelter. Other studies show that rent bank programs can be two to seven times more cost-effective than sheltering families in motels. This pilot project is an important opportunity to understand the effectiveness of this model in the Toronto context and is one of the ways the City can help families maintain housing stability.

The City of Toronto provides support through the Homelessness Initiatives Fund for a range of community-based housing help services for those at-risk of losing their housing. In this way, the City can build the capacity of local communities to engage in homelessness prevention activities. This includes funding to Housing Help Centres in five of the former municipalities. Housing Help Centres provide detailed listings of rental vacancies and maintain ongoing relationships with landlords to assist people in their housing search. In this way, Housing Help Centres provide a critical link between prospective tenants and landlords. This is particularly important for low-income tenants in competitive rental housing markets. In markets like Toronto where the vacancy rate is 0.8 percent, landlords are more likely to apply income criteria which screens low-income tenants out. Housing Help Centres can mitigate this trend by intervening directly on behalf of tenants. The funding and administration of Housing Help Centres will be downloaded from the Province to the City in January of 2000 providing further opportunities for the City to support these initiatives.

Toronto Social Services has established a shelter fund using savings, which arose through the introduction of the National Child Benefit Supplement. The shelter fund provides a way for the City to direct these savings to families who may be at-risk or have already lost their housing. The Shelter Fund is available to help families secure permanent housing if they are already homeless, maintain their housing and avoid eviction, and relocate to more affordable housing when required. The shelter fund may be used to cover rental and utility deposits and arrears, and the cost of household furnishings, moving and storage.

The City has adopted a strategy to encourage the private and community-based sector to develop much needed affordable housing. The City's strategy includes a housing first policy for surplus City land and buildings. Under this policy, land could be provided for housing development at full market value, at a discounted value, or at no cost depending on the housing model involved. To assist the City in the decision-making process a framework has been developed to determine how City resources, including land and buildings should be made available. In addition, a capital revolving fund to assist with the financing of demonstration projects with affordable housing components has been established. One of the first projects approved as part of the affordable housing strategy is a 20-unit building at Allan Road and Eglinton which will provide permanent housing and supports to single parent families, which may include families currently living in motels along Kingston Road.

(A copy of the Hostel Services Motel Standards, referred to in the foregoing report, is on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

The Community Services Committee reports, for the information of Council, also having had before it during consideration of the foregoing matter a communication (November 4, 1999) from Ms. Anne Dubas, President, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 79, attaching a copy of a letter to The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw, Federal Co-ordinator for Homelessness, urging the Federal Government to revive a national housing strategy and infrastructure program that will house the homeless and meet the needs of lower-income Canadians.

The following Members of Council appeared before the Community Services Committee in connection with the foregoing matter:

- Councillor David Soknacki, Scarborough Highland Creek;
- Councillor Ron Moeser, Scarborough Highland Creek;
- Councillor Gerry Altobello, Scarborough Bluffs; and
- Councillor Jack Layton, Don River.