



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

2016-17 Winter Readiness and Update on Shelter Occupancy

Date:	October 5, 2016
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of plans to provide services to people who are homeless for the 2016-17 winter season, as requested by Community Development and Recreation Committee in April 2016. It provides an overview of the services and supports provided in the winter by Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) as well as the additional initiatives underway for the upcoming winter season given continued high shelter occupancy throughout the summer months and the high demand for services last winter. This report also provides an update on the overall shelter system and ongoing work to increase system capacity to address occupancy pressures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the City, subject to the City entering into a lease agreement with the owner of 702 Kennedy Road, to enter into an agreement to amend the existing 2016 operating agreement with the Homes First Society up to \$500,000 for the provision of additional beds at that facility on a temporary basis until a permanent operator is secured to provide services for single women;
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, or his designate to execute such documents required to complete the agreement contemplated in Part 1 above, and all related documentation as required; and

3. City Council delegate authority to the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, for current and future year winter planning to:
 - a. add beds to the emergency shelter system for temporary winter services;
 - b. approve new locations for emergency shelters for the provision of temporary winter services; and
 - c. enter into new or amend existing agreements with service providers to provide funding for temporary winter services.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

Through the 2015 budget process, \$2.5 million gross and net was added to Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) Operating Budget to address shelter occupancy pressures and meet Council's service level standard of a 90% occupancy rate in all sectors. However, the timing of opening these programs have varied creating temporary savings in SSHA's Operating Budget. SSHA has experienced some additional savings due to the temporary closures of other shelter programs (i.e. Second Base Youth Shelter and the Salvation Army's Hope Shelter), which are anticipated to be replaced or re-opened in 2017. It is expected that the reopening of beds will have a positive impact on overall shelter capacity in all sectors once the funding added in 2015 is fully invested.

Further, an additional \$0.416 million gross and net was added in 2016 for the cold weather drop-ins to keep the two sites open for 24 hours a day throughout the months of January and February during the 2016/17 winter with alert-based services based on Extreme Cold Weather Alerts (ECWA) for November, December, March and April. One-time funding was used during the 2015/2016 winter season.

Due to the above, the costs to operate the services outlined in this report can be accommodated within Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's 2016 Approved Operating Budget.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Equity Impact

Housing and homelessness services, including shelter and cold weather services, serve a range of equity seeking groups including people experiencing homelessness, the working poor, youth, seniors, Aboriginal people, and other vulnerable groups.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of April 13, 2016, Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) considered item CD11.7 *Update on the Emergency Shelter System and Hostels to Homes Pilot* that provided an update on shelter system capacity and housing access initiatives to support long-term shelter users move into permanent housing. The Committee also requested that the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, report back to the October 20 meeting of CDRC on the status of shelter occupancy, winter readiness, and the evaluation of the Hostels to Homes Pilot.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.7>

At its meeting of November 3 and 4, 2015, City Council adopted *2015 Hostels Allocations to Relieve Occupancy Pressures*. The report updated Council on the outcome of a REOI process implemented to identify community not-for-profit agencies that could establish new shelter programs or expand existing programs. The supplementary report *Homelessness Service Planning for the 2015-2016 Winter Season* was also considered by City Council that outlined initiatives planned for the winter season as a result of high shelter occupancy.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD7.3>

At its meeting on March 31, April 1 and 2, 2015, City Council adopted CD2.2 *Infrastructure and Service Improvement Plan for the Emergency Shelter System* which sets out an infrastructure and service improvement plan to guide the transformation of the emergency shelter system and requested staff to identify sites for up to 15 emergency shelters over the next five years.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD2.2>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Demand for shelter services has been trending up since 2012 and has remained high throughout 2016. The system continues to operate at capacity, above the Council-approved 90% occupancy threshold, making it difficult for people to access a bed.

In 2015, more than 16,000 different people accessed the shelter system at some point. The median length of stay was 52 days, meaning half of all shelter users exit the system in less than two months. A small group stay for longer periods – 10% of all clients in 2015 had been in the shelter system for one year or more. In addition, 17% were repeat shelter stayers, meaning they have accessed the shelter system more than three times and have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness. However, the largest group of clients using the shelter system are people experiencing homelessness for the first time. Overall, 41% were accessing the shelter system for the first time and had been homeless for less than six months.

In September 2016, average shelter occupancy rate was 95%. Additionally, the overall shelter occupancy rate did not decrease throughout the summer months as it has traditionally in the past.

Given nightly occupancy rates remain above target, SSHA is taking the following steps to prepare for the 2016-17 winter season. These steps build on SSHA's experience and contingency plan from the 2015-16 winter season.

COMMENTS

A. SSHA's Winter Weather Services

The City's cold weather season runs annually from November 15 to April 15. SSHA works with community partners to deliver a range of winter weather services, some of which operate throughout the season and others when an Extreme Cold Weather Alert is called by the Medical Officer of Health.

1. Two 24-hour Cold Weather Drop-Ins

Two 24-hour cold weather drop-ins operate continuously between January 1 and February 28 and are operated on an alert basis between November 15 and December 31 and March 1 and April 15. Services at the drop-ins include warm food and drinks, referrals to shelter and other services. Mats are provided for sleeping. These services are well used. They were introduced during the 2014-15 winter season on an alert basis only and were expanded to have continuous service during the coldest months of January and February for the 2015-16 winter season. At its meeting of October 5 and 6, 2016, City Council will consider a recommendation in item CD14.11 *2017/18 Community Grants to Address Homelessness* to run continuous services starting on December 15, 2016 to February 28, 2017.

2. Out of the Cold Program

During the cold weather season, the Out of the Cold (OOTC) program is activated to supplement shelter capacity. OOTC is coordinated by Dixon Hall through a purchase of service agreement with SSHA. It provides meal and overnight bedded programs delivered by volunteers at 16 sites across a network of interdenominational, faith-based organizations. The capacity of each location ranges from 15 to 75 beds with up to four sites operating per night.

3. 24-Hour Women's Drop-In Services

In 2015, two year round low-barrier 24-hour drop-ins for vulnerable and street involved women opened. One is located in the downtown east and is operated by Fred Victor Centre at the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women and the other is operated by Sistering in the downtown west. Both drop-ins will continue providing 24-hour services throughout the winter months.

4. *Services Triggered by Extreme Cold Weather Alerts*

When an Extreme Cold Weather Alert is called by the Medical Officer of Health, the following additional services are triggered by SSHA:

- More than 100 organizations and agencies that work with homeless people are advised to prepare for increased service demands.
- Shelters are directed to suspend any service restrictions they may have.
- Increased street outreach services are activated. Front-line staff focus their work on informing clients about the danger of weather conditions and transporting them to indoor locations.
- Transit tokens are made available at many drop-ins so people can reach shelters or 24-hour drop-in services.
- 11 additional shelter spaces are opened at Fort York Residence.

B. Contingency Planning for the 2016-17 Winter Season

In addition to the winter services described above, SSHA is undertaking the following contingency planning measures for the 2016-17 winter season based on the past two years of winter service use and persistently high shelter occupancy rates throughout 2016.

A summary of the anticipated additional capacity through enhanced services for the 2016-17 winter can be found in Appendix A.

1. *Expanded Motel/Hotel Capacity*

The City routinely uses motel rooms to expand capacity in the family shelter sector based on demand. For the past two winters, in order to temporarily increase capacity in the emergency shelter system, SSHA contracted with two additional motel providers and expanded its use of motel beds by making them available to individuals and couples based on client needs assessments and case plans.

Drawing on experience from the two previous winters, SSHA is currently exploring the opportunities to enhance one of its motel contracts by 10 rooms, which would provide 35 beds. Additionally, SSHA is exploring the opportunity to enter into a contract with a new hotel/motel provider to use two full floors of 24 rooms, adding up to 84 beds to overall system capacity.

With both options, appropriate case planning, client and housing supports would be provided by SSHA to the clients in the expanded motel programs.

SSHA is planning to re-release an RFP to expand the number of hotel/motel providers it works with to ensure there is adequate additional capacity in the family sector. SSHA is also developing a protocol to access additional motel/hotel space when current motel capacity is unavailable.

2. *Short-Term Emergency Shelter Space at 702 Kennedy Rd.*

702 Kennedy Road, owned by The Incumbent and Churchwardens of the Church of the Epiphany ("Grace Church") and leased to Second Base (Scarborough) Youth Shelter, in Ward 35 housed the 60-bed Second Base Youth Shelter until October of 2015 and is currently vacant. The facility was purpose-built as an emergency shelter in 1992 and staff advise that it is in good condition. Staff are currently in negotiations with Grace Church, Second Base, and other involved parties for the City to become the tenant of Grace Church. Approval for such a lease relationship will be sought by way of delegated approval as will require the sublease with Homes First Society. It is anticipated that the long-term shelter program could open in 2017.

In the meantime, the City is exploring opportunities to use the space this winter as an emergency shelter for adult women. It is recommended that the site serve women in order to address the need for additional capacity in the women's sector. This temporary winter shelter would be operated through a purchase of service contract with Homes First Society, which currently operates another shelter in Scarborough and other shelters within the city. Homes First Society brings both extensive knowledge of the Scarborough community and experience operating emergency shelters. Staff confirm that use of the site for short-term emergency shelter purposes would comply with the Municipal Shelter By-law (By-laws No. 138-2003 and No. 569-2013, Chapter 150 Specific Use Regulations).

3. *Enhancing the Out of the Cold Program*

As part of the contingency planning during the 2015-16 winter season, additional funding was made available to the Out of the Cold (OOTC) program to add up to 67 sleeping spaces as needed at eight sites over the course of a week. Overall occupancy of the OOTC program was lower on average during the 2015-16 winter season compared to the previous year. SSHA attributes this lower OOTC occupancy in part to the record mild winter in 2015-16. However, these additional spaces will be kept as part of the overall OOTC service compliment for the upcoming 2016-17 winter season.

SSHA is also working with Dixon Hall to contact other faith-based groups in the downtown core to gauge their interest in operating an OOTC for this upcoming winter. One parish has expressed a preliminary interest in expanding their volunteer-based meal program on Monday evenings and Tuesday mornings to provide an overnight service as part of the OOTC network. Staff will continue working with Dixon Hall and the parish to explore this opportunity.

4. *Expanding Cold Weather Drop-In Services to a Third Site*

Given the significant overnight service usage of cold weather drop-in services during the 2015-16 season, and concerns raised about health and safety standards, SSHA is exploring opening a third cold weather drop-in site that would provide continuous overnight only service from December 15, 2016 to February 28, 2017. This third service would help to address health and safety concerns related to operating overnight services in which service need surpasses capacity in the evening. A site has not yet been confirmed due to challenges in identifying both an appropriate space within the downtown core and identifying a community partner to operate the service.

5. *Youth Cold Weather Drop-In Service*

A cold weather drop-in service for youth operated continuously last year from December 2015 until March 2016 by the YMCA at their Vanauley Street site. They are not in a position to offer the service again this winter. Thus, SSHA is currently exploring the opportunity to re-establish a youth cold weather drop-in service with a different service provider that works with youth within the downtown core.

6. *Review of SSHA's Winter Services*

The services outlined in this report to provide temporary, emergency responses to vulnerable clients during cold weather are services that have evolved over time to respond to increasing pressures on occupancy, particularly in the winter months. This range of programs (OOTC, 24 hour drop-ins, SHARC respite, expanded motel capacity) employ different service models and approaches, and are used by different client populations.

Over the course of the winter, staff will be conducting a review of the cold weather services available, including developing a profile of client needs and outcomes at the different programs, and exploring good practices for low-barrier services that provide a critical service for very vulnerable and street-involved populations. Based on this review, staff will make recommendations for proposed approaches for the 2017/18 winter season.

C. New Services Available as Part of the Shelter Infrastructure Plan's Implementation

1. *Update on Shelter Occupancy*

In response to high occupancy rates, several initiatives have been underway since 2015 to increase overall capacity including the approval of SSHA's four-point shelter infrastructure strategy and service improvement plan. The plan outlined the need for up to 15 new shelters over five years to add additional capacity to the system, address program closures and relocations, and as part of the George Street Revitalization. Other components of the plan included:

- The Hostels to Homes Project aimed to house long term shelter stayers with housing allowances and follow up supports to assist them in leaving the shelter system permanently;
- Working to ensure existing shelters permanently stay where they are currently located; and
- Implementing new policy and quality assurance initiatives within the shelter system which support better housing outcomes for service users.

Through the 2015 budget process, \$2.5 million was added to SSHA's Operating Budget to address shelter occupancy pressures and meet Council's service level standard of a 90% occupancy rate in all sectors.

Since then, SSHA has added a number of permanent beds at existing purchase of service locations which meet the equivalent of one new shelter. In addition, SSHA has opened one new shelter location and has received Council approval for a second that is forecast to open in November 2016, resulting in three new shelter equivalents already added to the system. The new LGBTQ2S shelter for youth, Sprout House, which was previously approved by Council also opened in 2015.

SSHA has received Council approval to open a fourth and fifth additional location which are in various stages of planning, development and construction with openings targeted in 2017. Approval for a sixth shelter at 731 Runnymede will be considered by City Council at their meeting of October 5 and 6, 2016. The addition of 14 beds at the Fred Victor Centre Bethlehem United program and the creation of a new women's shelter and a new youth shelter in Scarborough are also targeted for 2017. Appendix B provides more details on these sites. It is expected that these new programs will help address overall shelter occupancy.

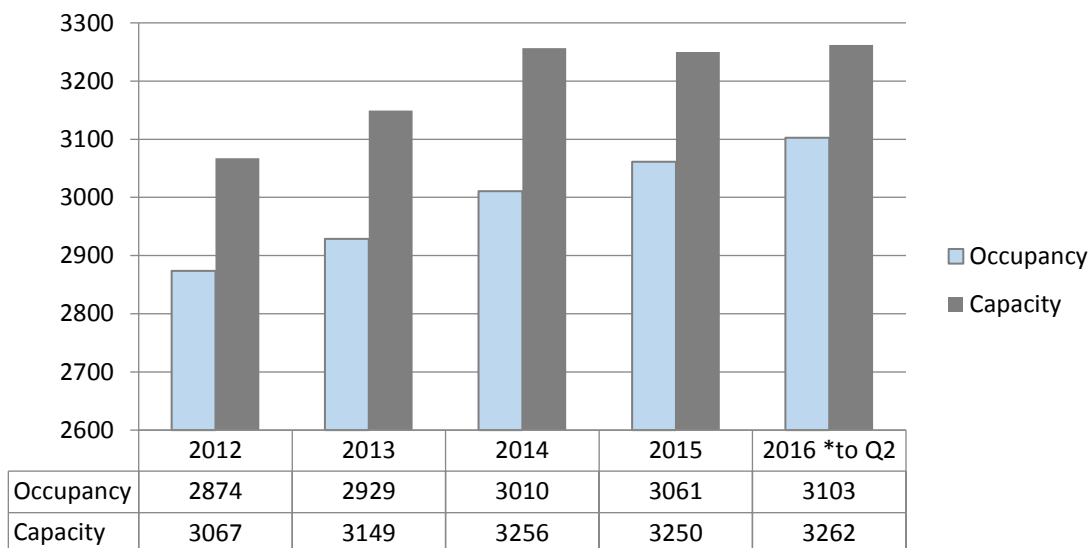
In 2015, additional beds were added in other existing programs to offset the loss of beds through program closures such as Salvation Army Hope and Second Base Youth Shelter. However, the loss of these shelters have impacted overall efforts to increase available shelter capacity in 2016.

Between March 2015 when the Shelter Infrastructure and Improvement Plan was approved, and September 2016, a total of 281 shelter beds have been added to system capacity. However, an additional 450 beds have been lost. The result of this is a net loss of 169 beds.

	March 2015	Sept 2016	Increases	Decreases	Total Change
Men's	1759	1643	154	-270	-116
Women's	603	647	44	0	44
Co-ed	410	420	10	0	10
Youth	520	518	58	-60	-2
Singles Total	3292	3228	266	-330	-64
Family shelter	774	709	15	-80	-65
Family motel	410	370		-40	-40
Family Total	1184	1079	15	-120	-105
System Total	4476	4307	281	-450	-169

As capacity in the shelter system has increased over the past several years, shelter use has also continued to increase. Although there are some seasonal variations, looking at trends year to year, the overall shelter capacity in the singles sector has increased from a nightly average of 3059 in 2012 to 3262 in 2016 (to end of Q2). However, the demand for shelter has increased at a greater rate, from 2866 nightly average in 2012 to 3103 in 2016 (to end of Q2). The average occupancy rate in the singles sector in Q2 2011 was 90.3% and was 95.8% during the same quarter in 2016.

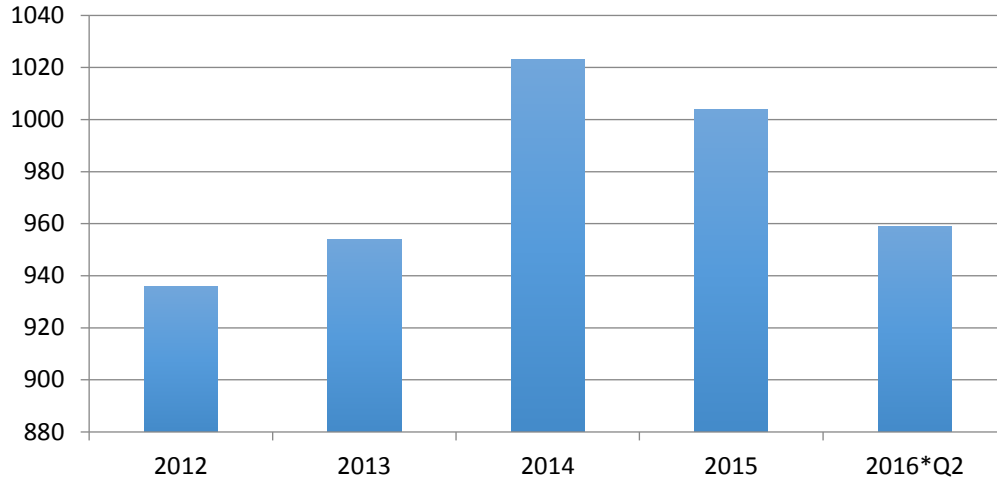
Singles Sector Average Nightly Use 2012-2016*



The family shelter sector occupancy fluctuates based on demand driven, in part, by changes to federal immigration policy and visa requirements. The system can expand and contract using available motel contracts. Average annual use of the family shelter sector has been decreasing since in 2014 (1023 people per night) to 1004 average people per night in 2015 and 959 average people per night in the first six months of 2016. However,

nightly occupancy in the family sector has been increasing through August and September, indicating a trend towards increasing occupancy in the second half of 2016.

Family Sector Average Nightly Use 2012-2016*



Current occupancy pressures are due to more people using the shelter system on a nightly basis than in previous years. These occupancy pressures are in part being driven by an overall tightening of the rental housing market making it more difficult for people to transition quickly out of shelters in to housing. Toronto's rental market is currently characterized by high rents, low vacancies, and the loss of low-end of market units, such as the conversion and redevelopment of rooming houses and hotels. These factors combined to create fewer housing options for low-income Torontonians.

Additional pressures are being generated in the single men's sector due to an outbreak of Group A Streptococcal infection at Seaton House. This has resulted in the temporary closure of 103 beds in efforts to control the outbreak which is having an impact on the single men's sector. An additional 22 sleeping spaces have been made available at four different shelter sites to make up for this loss. These changes are captured in the table above. SSHA and Toronto Public Health continue working together to manage and end the outbreak.

As outlined in previous reports to City Council, opening new shelter sites can be a lengthy process. This is due to an active real estate market which limits the availability of suitable sites, the current approval process, and any renovations/capital upgrades that are required to the sites or buildings so they can be operated as a shelter.

2. *Christie-Ossington Neighbourhood Centre's Bloor Street Program*

As referenced above, a new shelter program is expected to open in November 2016. City Council approved a new 30-bed shelter for men to be operated by Christie-Ossington Neighbourhood Centre (CONC) at 850-54 Bloor Street West in November 2015. After

renovations and other work to the building, the new shelter is anticipated to open next month, adding additional capacity to the men's emergency shelter system in advance of winter. Adult men experiencing homelessness will be able to access this program through Central Intake, the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre at 129 Peter Street and through CONC directly.

3. *Update on the Hostels to Homes Pilot*

The Hostels to Homes Pilot (H2HP) program was identified in SSHA's Shelter Infrastructure and Service Improvement Plan as an additional strategy to focus on providing housing access and follow-up supports to those clients who had been in shelter for long periods of time, with the objective of freeing up those beds for emergency shelter use by people in housing crisis.

The program launched in March 2016 with three teams of housing workers (two City staff and one community partner agency staff) to engage clients in development of a housing plan. Once enrolled, clients have access to a housing allowance and housing follow-up supports to assist them in stabilizing in their new housing. As a pilot, the housing worker teams have been engaging clients initially in 9 shelter locations, with more added as the teams have the capacity to move to additional locations. The focus of the H2HP has been engaging with clients who have been in shelter for two years or more. More than 115 clients have been engaged, and over 70 have agreed to participate in the program. Of those, 14 (20%) have successfully been assisted to find housing in the community over the first six months of the program (as of end of August).

Preliminary feedback from housing workers participating in the pilot has been that engaging clients, many of whom have been in the shelter system for five to 10 years or more, has been challenging and more time consuming than originally anticipated. For many clients, getting initial consent to participate in the program is a successful step in itself on the way to housing. Staff continue to work with existing clients to develop housing plans, as well as engaging additional clients, and anticipate greater momentum in achieving successful outcomes in the next six months of the program.

The Hostels to Homes pilot is using a new Housing Support Assessment Tool (HSAT), which received funding from the provincial Local Poverty Reduction Fund for a third party evaluation that is being conducted by the Centre for Urban Health Solutions (CUHS) at St Michael's Hospital. The HSAT is intended to help measure clients' housing support needs in a range of different domains and assist housing workers to develop case plans with their clients. Evaluation of housing outcomes from the H2HP will be evaluated along with the HSAT by CUHS, and results from the HSAT will provide additional insights into the specific needs of clients who have been in the shelter system for long periods of time. Results of the evaluation are anticipated at the end of 2017.

Next Steps

This report recommends that City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration to amend the existing operating contract with Homes First Society to operate under a Purchase of Services Agreement, a 60-bed temporary winter program at 702 Kennedy Road, subject to the City first entering into a lease agreement with Grace Church. It further recommends that City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to add beds to the emergency shelter system, approve new locations, and enter into new or amend operating agreements with service providers for current and future year temporary winter services.

SSHA will continue working with its community partners to expand the winter programs available through the potential addition of more OOTC sites, a third 24-hour cold weather drop-in and a youth 24-hour cold winter drop-in. Efforts are underway to fully invest the funding added in 2015 and to expand the overall capacity of the shelter system and will result in a new program coming online before the end of the year and multiple programs opening in 2017.

CONTACT

Karen Smith
Director, Hostel Services
Shelter, Support and Housing
Administration
Tel: 416-392-5417
Email: ksmith@toronto.ca

Mary-Anne Bédard
Director, Housing Stability Policy and
Strategic Investments
Shelter, Support and Housing
Administration
Tel: 416-397-0260
Email: mbedard@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Rob Cressman
Acting General Manager
Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Additional Service Capacity by Program for the 2016-17 Winter Season

Appendix B - Anticipated Changes in Bed Capacity: October 1, 2016 – December 31, 2017

APPENDIX A
Additional Service Capacity by Program for the 2016-17 Winter Season

Service/Program	Timeframe	Output
Enhanced Motel Program - 1	Aug – Dec 2016	10 rooms (35 beds)
Enhanced Motel Program - 2	Oct – Mar 2017	24 rooms (84 beds)
702 Kennedy Rd. Temporary Program	Dec – Apr 2017	60 beds women
Third Cold Weather Drop-in	Nov – Mar 2017	50 spaces
Youth Cold Weather Drop-in	Nov – Mar 2017	50 spaces
TOTAL		279 spaces

APPENDIX B
Anticipated Changes in Bed Capacity: October 1, 2016 – December 31, 2017

	Shelter	Status	Beds (Actual or Anticipated)
2015/2016 Progress			
Women	Fred Victor – Dundas St	Opened	37
Youth	YMCA Sprott House	Opened	25
Men	Christie Ossington - Bloor St	Opening Nov 2016	30
2017 Planned			
Men	Salvation Army Hope relocation	Approved - renovations underway	60
Co-ed	New Birchmount Replacement - Seniors	Approved – renovations underway	100 (increase of 40)
Youth	New Shelter - Scarborough	In Planning	45
Men	GSR Seaton House Replacement - Runnymede Rd	Before Council	50
Women	New Shelter - Scarborough	In planning	45
Co-ed	Additional beds - Fred Victor Bethlehem	In planning	14