
2016 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Requested Expenditure for the Cold Weather Drop-Ins

Issue/Background:

Budget Committee at its meeting of January 5, 6, 8 and 11, 2016 requested that the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) provide a Briefing Note to the January 18, 2016 Budget Committee meeting showing a breakdown of the \$416,000 requested service enhancement for the 24-hour cold weather drop-ins.

Key Points:

During the 2014-15 winter season, SSHA funded two community-based low-barrier cold weather drop-in services for people who are homeless. These services operated only when Extreme Cold Weather Alerts were called by the Medical Officer of Health. Margaret's Toronto East Drop-in operated one service at 323 Dundas Street East near Sherbourne Street and St. Felix Centre operated the other service at 25 Augusta Avenue near Queen and Spadina Streets.

In June 2015, City Council adopted the report CD4.4 "*Feasibility of Enhanced Cold Weather Drop-In Services*" authorizing the General Manager, SSHA to submit a business case for enhanced services for the 2016-17 winter for consideration through the 2016 City Operating Budget process. The enhanced services would operate continuously during the months of January and February and on an alert basis in November, December, March, and April.

At its meeting of November 3 and 4, 2015, City Council authorized that 24-hour continuous cold weather drop-in services be implemented in the coldest months of the year, January and February 2016, with one-time funding from the Property Tax Stabilization Fund. At that time, there was insufficient funding in the approved 2015 Operating Budget for SSHA to introduce the enhanced service level for the 2015-16 winter season.

In 2015, \$240,000 was allocated for the operation of the cold weather drop-ins during Extreme Cold Weather Alerts. Actual costs of operation last winter season were closer to \$460,000 due to the number of alerts, the volume and complexity of client needs, and the requirement to ensure the safety of service users and staff. The enhanced cold weather drop-in service model with continuous services in January and February costs up to \$656,000 a year, which is \$416,000 more than the base budget of \$240,000.

The service enhancement of \$416,000 requested through the 2016 budget process takes into account the actual daily cost of operation and would allow for 24-hour operation of the cold weather drop-ins for two months with an alert based service in November, December, March and April.

As of January 13, 2016 there are on average 303 drop-in visits during a 24-hour period between both services and on average 100 individuals using the services overnight (based on a count at 4 am) between both locations.

Questions & Answers:

Q1: Are the cold weather drop-ins currently open 24-hours a day?

A1: Yes. Both Margaret's and St. Felix have been opened on a continual 24-hour a day basis since January 1, 2016. There were no Extreme Cold Weather Alerts in November and December so the drop-ins were not open prior to January 1, 2016.

Q2: What is the individual budget for each of the cold weather drop-ins?

A2: The operating budget for each cold weather drop-in is over \$300,000 to provide continuous service for two months and to operate on an alert basis for the remainder of the cold weather season. The operating budgets for each program include staff salaries, benefits, food, cleaning supplies, client travel costs (e.g. TTC tokens), security, pest control, and laundry (e.g. daily cleaning of blankets) as well as overhead expenses.

Q3: Will this service be available during the 2016-17 winter if the budget enhancement is not approved?

A3: Should City Council not approve the \$416,000 service enhancement to SSHA's 2016 Operating Budget, the 24-hour cold weather drop-ins will be open only when an Extreme Cold Weather Alert is called from November 2016 to April 2017. Initial conversations with the agencies operating the cold weather drop-ins and service users indicate that the continuous service is preferable during the coldest weather months. Reasons for this include: scheduling consistent staff is easier; service users do not have to leave on short notice when an alert ends; and on-site community partnerships (e.g. nursing and housing supports) can be developed when a continuous service is in place.

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Date: January 14, 2016