

Supplementary Report on Extending the Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre Agreement

Date: July 12, 2021

To: City Council

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto Public Health and City partners continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through public health measures and the rollout of the vaccine campaign. Drawing on lessons from other jurisdictions, epidemiological analysis, and emerging evidence, Toronto Public Health is taking steps to prepare for a potential resurgence and additional waves in the pandemic, such as a fourth or fifth wave. While it is not possible to predict when these resurgence periods might occur or the impact on the City, there is a need to ensure appropriate supports remain in place for individuals who have COVID-19 infection.

On July 26 and 27, 2020, City Council approved the establishment of the Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre (TVIC) funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The TVIC was intended as one of many public health strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, particularly for those who are at risk of COVID-19 transmission within their household. Since the launch of the TVIC on September 12, 2020, 1,143 individuals have safely isolated and recovered from COVID-19 through the program.

The funding agreement with PHAC is set to expire on August 31, 2021. This report seeks approval for the Medical Officer of Health to extend the funding agreement with PHAC to March 31, 2022, request additional funds from the federal government to enable this extension, and update any other agreements entered into to expend the funds and operate the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Medical Officer to Health to extend the funding agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada for the receipt and expenditure of funding for

the Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre and to undertake appropriate measures to ensure full and effective use of federal funds, on such terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the Medical Officer of Health and in a form approved by the City Solicitor.

2. City Council approve the receipt of the funds from the Public Health Agency of Canada for the continued operation of the Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement until March 2022.

3. City Council authorize the Medical Officer to Health to increase the Toronto Public Health 2021 Operating Budget by \$3.329 million gross and \$0 net and to include \$2.466 million and \$0 net in the 2022 Operating Budget Request for the continued operation of Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre.

4. City Council authorize the Medical Officer of Health to enter into new or extend existing agreements or other suitable arrangements with other City divisions, federal or provincial agencies, community agencies, private entities and/or individuals to expend the funds from the Public Health Agency of Canada for the operation of the Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement and on such other terms and conditions acceptable to the Medical Officer of Health.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides 100 percent funding directly to the City of Toronto for the operation of the TVIC. While Toronto Public Health and City partners are actively engaged in recovery planning, Toronto Public Health recommends an extension of the program in anticipation of COVID-19 resurgence.

Upon approval of this report, Toronto Public Health would request an extension of the funding agreement with PHAC until March 31, 2022. It is recommended that Toronto Public Health work with PHAC to build flexibility into the agreement that allows for the suspension of the operation and return of funds, should the program no longer be required.

Cost estimates provided in Table A below have been developed based on the actual costs of operating the TVIC. It is anticipated that the 2021 Approved Operating Base Budget for Toronto Public Health will increase by \$3.329 million gross and \$0 net to operate the site from September 2021 - March 2022. The additional \$2.466 million and \$0 net will be included in the 2022 Operating Budget Submission.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed the report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Table A: Costing Estimates for COVID-19 Isolation Site, Gross (millions \$)*

Summary of expenses	October 2020 – August 2021	September 2021 – March 2022	Total*
Cleaning	0.552	0.302	0.855
Laundry	0.163	0.321	0.485
Materials	1.326	1.433	2.759
Personnel	0.940	0.645	1.585
Lodging	4.824	2.595	7.419
Travel	0.065	0.111	0.176
Contingency	0.000	0.387	0.387
TOTAL*	7.871	5.795	13.666

*The Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre is 100% funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada

DECISION HISTORY

On June 26 and 27, 2020, City Council approved the Medical Officer of Health to enter into a funding agreement with the appropriate department of the Government of Canada for the receipt and expenditure of funding to establish a voluntary isolation centre, and other agreements necessary to expend the funds. City Council approved the receipt of funds and authorized adjustments to the 2020 Operating Budget for Toronto Public Health. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL18.1>

COMMENTS

The Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre (TVIC) offers temporary accommodation and a safe place for individuals with COVID-19 or their close contacts to self-isolate, rest, and recover, particularly those who are not able to do so safely within their household. The TVIC was established as a public health strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce household transmission.

Toronto Public Health operates the program, provides support to all guests during their stay, and works closely with Toronto Paramedics Services, hotel operators, and security staff onsite to support the overall safety and well-being of guests. During their stay at the TVIC, guests receive a private room in a hotel, free transportation to and from the site, meals, and language interpretation services.

Toronto Public Health follows provincial guidance on the length of time that an individual is required to isolate, which could be 10, 14, or 20 days depending on an individual's

COVID-19 status. Although use of the TVIC is voluntary, individuals are encouraged to remain at the site for the full duration of their isolation period.

Program Performance and Evaluation

Toronto Public Health has continued to grow and develop the TVIC program since its launch. Over time, adjustments have been made to the eligibility criteria and referral pathways to ensure that those who are in need of the program are able to access it.

Metrics collected on the program include the following highlights:

- As of July 12, 2021, 1,143 individuals have safely isolated at the TVIC since the program launched.
- On average, individuals isolate at the TVIC for 8.5 days.
- Approximately 96% of individuals who stay at the TVIC remain for the full duration of their isolation period.

Toronto Public Health partnered with Public Health Ontario to evaluate the program. The evaluation examined the development and launch of the TVIC, and analyzed information about who accessed the program, in order to ensure that the program was meeting its objective: to provide a safe space to isolate and recover for those who could not do so safely at home.

Data collected from September 2020 – March 31, 2021 found the following:

- 88.5% of individuals came to the isolation centre within 5 days of COVID-19 positive test result or symptom onset.
- The majority of individuals who accessed the program:
 - Earned an income of less than \$29,900.00 annually
 - Came from households with five individuals or more
 - Came from households that they were sharing with roommates.

Data collected from September 2020 – January 31, 2021 demonstrated that 25% of individuals who accessed the isolation centre came from occupations where they had been exposed to COVID-19, including:

- Long-term care and retirement home sectors
- Personal support workers
- Healthcare settings, such as hospitals
- Child care settings
- Shelters.

Toronto Public Health implemented a survey for individuals who stayed at the TVIC to provide feedback about the program. Out of 87 respondents, 100% stated they would recommend the program to someone else if they needed a space to safely isolate.

An Example of Toronto's Ongoing Leadership

The Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre was the first of its kind in Canada. The program model was used to inform the launch and rollout of the Safe Voluntary Isolation Site Program by the federal government through PHAC, which launched in October 2020. Since fall 2020, Toronto Public Health held several informational exchange meetings with other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States, including the Province of Ontario to share best practices on how to develop an isolation centre and how to safely operate the program, ensuring all appropriate infection, prevention, and control measures are in place to protect guests and staff.

The operation of the TVIC has been a critical strategy in preventing the spread of COVID-19, and is one of many strategies employed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program has grown to be a best practice that can be shared across Canada and internationally. Toronto Public Health acknowledges that it is a significant step to choose to isolate at the TVIC, and the City of Toronto is grateful for all those who have made this important decision.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE



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