



STAFF REPORT Action Required

Enhancing Streets to Homes Service to Address the Needs of People Who Are Street Involved, Including Those Who Panhandle

Date:	April 21, 2008
To:	Executive Committee
From:	General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends enhancing the successful Streets to Homes service in order to address the needs of people who are street involved, including those who panhandle. “Street involved” includes people who are homeless and living outdoors, people who stay in shelters at night but spend large amounts of their day on the street, and people who are housed and panhandling legally. The proposed enhanced street outreach service will also allow for the ability to meet the special needs of youth. In so doing, this report responds to the direction provided by Executive Committee in 2007 to pilot a social service response for people who are housed and panhandling in a legal manner and report on the experience; report on a consultation with Business Improvement Areas, Residents’ and Ratepayers’ Associations and operators of major attractions; report on specific methods used in other Canadian cities to curb panhandling and report on aggressive panhandling.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

1. an enhanced Streets to Homes service be used to assist people who panhandle or are otherwise street involved to access services, housing and, where possible, employment in relation to their needs;
2. Business Improvement Areas, Hotel Associations and similar groups be requested to create employment opportunities for people who were previously panhandling

- or otherwise street involved and are now accessing additional services in relation to their needs;
3. one point of contact be established, such as a phone number, that all businesses, major attractions, residents, visitors, commuters and social service providers in the City can access when requesting Streets to Homes services to assist people who panhandle and other street involved persons, such point of contact to be staffed seven days a week;
 4. the 2008 Operating Budget for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration be increased by \$2.577 million gross, offset by a draw of \$2.577 million from the Social Housing Stabilization Reserve Fund to enhance the Streets to Homes program;
 5. funding for 2009 and subsequent years be included in the Program Operating Budget Submission for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration for consideration as part of the 2009 Operating Budget Process;
 6. other orders of government and the business community be requested to cost-share funding in 2009 and beyond; and any such cost-sharing achieved to be included in future Divisional Operating Budget Submissions for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; and
 7. for panhandling that is illegal, the Province be requested to consider a Diversion Court or other alternative judicial response for panhandling offences to achieve community service and community benefits rather than levying people with fines that they are frequently unable to pay.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of the recommendations in this report will result in an increase of \$2.577 million in the 2008 gross budget for the Streets to Homes program. The uncommitted balance in the Social Housing Stabilization Reserve Fund is \$5.734 million. This report recommends that the enhancement be funded from the reserve fund leaving an uncommitted projected year-end balance of \$3.157 million. The service enhancement includes an increase in the approved staff complement in the Street to Homes program of 48.1 temporary FTEs, dedicated to addressing the needs of people who panhandle and other street involved persons. This staff increment provides for the proposed enhanced service as summarized on page 20 of the report, including the addition of a third seasonal shift in summer 2009. In 2009, the ongoing operating costs of the enhancement total \$4.973 million.

Any cost-sharing achieved through negotiation with other orders of government and the business community will be included in the future Operating Budget Submissions for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration.

Street to Homes Service for Street Involved People Including Panhandlers (\$000's)					
	2008			2009	
	Base	Enhanced	Total Program	Enhanced	Total Program
<u>Expenditures</u>					
Salaries	2,124.2	1,689.2	3,813.4	3,622.7	5,746.9
Other Programming	193.3	887.5	1,080.8	1,350.0	1,543.3
Total Gross Expenditures	2,317.5	2,576.7	4,894.2	4,972.7	7,290.2
<u>Revenues</u>					
CHPP funding*	220.3		220.3		220.3
Social Housing Reserve Fund	0.0	2,576.7	2,576.7		0.0
Total Revenues	220.3	2,576.7	2,797.0	0.0	220.3
Net Expenditures	2,097.2	0.0	2,097.2	**4,972.7	7,069.9

*Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP), Provincial Funding

**Net expenditure required in 2009 if cost-sharing from other orders of government and business is not achieved

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

DECISION HISTORY

The City Solicitor submitted a report dated September 6, 2006 to the Policy and Finance Committee which addressed various legal issues relating to panhandling. An electronic copy of the report can be found at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/pof/pof060918/it040.pdf>

At its meeting of January 24, 2007, the Economic Development Committee considered a communication from Councillor Ootes in which he recommended that appropriate staff report “on how the City of Toronto, working with the Toronto Police Service, can implement and enforce a by-law that would prohibit panhandling within the officially designated tourist areas”. This recommendation was referred to the City Solicitor for a report to the appropriate standing committee. An electronic copy of the communication from Councillor Ootes can be found at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ed/bgrd/backgroundfile-635.pdf>

At its meeting of May 28, 2007, the Executive Committee considered a staff report from the City Manager and City Solicitor which addressed the requests for a by-law stemming

from the communication made to the Economic Development Committee from Councillor Ootes. Executive Committee did not recommend that a by-law be developed. Instead, Executive Committee directed that a social service response be piloted to address panhandling that occurs legally; that Business Improvement Areas, Residents' and Ratepayers' Associations and operators of major attractions be consulted to develop a "holistic approach to address panhandling that addresses the concerns of business while maintaining the rights and dignities of the urban poor"; that research be conducted on specific methods used in other Canadian cities to curb panhandling; that Toronto Police Services be requested to provide information on aggressive panhandling; and, that research be conducted on the root causes of street begging and government policy changes required to address street begging. An electronic copy of the report can be found at:

www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-3801.pdf

COMMENTS

For the purposes of this report, the term "panhandling" is used to refer to the act of soliciting something of value, including money, whether or not goods or services are offered in exchange.

A distinction is also made between legal panhandling and illegal or aggressive panhandling. People who panhandle in a legal manner are the focus of this report and the proposed enhanced street outreach service is designed to respond to their needs. Illegal panhandling, which is defined as either being aggressive or to a captive audience as defined in the *Safe Streets Act* is the purview of the Toronto Police Service who enforce the *Safe Streets Act*.

Unless otherwise noted, the act of "panhandling" referenced in the report is assumed to be legal and not be in violation of the *Safe Streets Act*.

This report proposes an enhanced service to better meet the needs of street involved persons that is grounded in a housing first approach, and builds upon the success of Streets to Homes and the 2007 pilot project that worked with people who were housed and panhandling. In so doing, the report:

- provides information about the Streets to Homes program, and the successful impacts that "housing first" has on people's lives;
- outlines how the pilot project to address the needs of people who were housed and legally panhandling was conducted;
- shares key findings from the pilot project;
- highlights feedback received in consultation sessions with the business community and Ratepayers' Associations;

- provides information about approaches used elsewhere to curb panhandling, including by-law approaches;
- provides highlights of *Safe Streets Act* enforcement in Toronto; and
- outlines the root causes of street begging.

1. **Origins of the 2007 Pilot Project: the Streets to Homes Program and the Housing First Approach**

In February 2005, City Council made a commitment to end street homelessness and established the Streets to Homes Program. Since that time, over 1,600 homeless individuals have been housed directly from the street with the assistance of street outreach staff both from the City and its community partners. As a result of extensive follow-up supports put in place by community agencies, 88% of the people remain housed.

The Streets to Homes strategy is based on the idea, often referred to as “housing first”, that providing permanent housing is the best way to end an individual’s homelessness and that other barriers, such as lack of employment skills, addictions, and poor mental and physical health, can best be addressed once a person has stable housing. Research and experience has shown that formerly homeless individuals, even those with multiple barriers such as mental health and substance use issues, can successfully maintain housing when they have in place supports appropriate to their needs.

Housing outreach workers assist their clients through each step needed to find housing, such as replacing identification, accessing income supports, completing housing applications, and searching for apartments. A key principle of the Streets to Homes program is an end to “blind referrals”. An outreach worker does not tell a homeless person where to get income assistance or where an apartment for rent is located. Instead, the outreach worker accompanies the client to appointments, and where necessary, advocates or negotiates on his or her behalf. This helps to ensure that clients receive the services to which they are entitled, but which they may not have been able to access had they attended on their own.

Once clients are in housing, the next challenge is ensuring they are able to keep their housing. Before becoming a Streets to Homes client, people must accept three requirements. As a longer-term housing strategy, they must complete an application for the centralized subsidized housing waiting list. Clients must also agree to have their rent paid directly to the landlord from their social assistance benefits. This ensures that rent is paid on time and reduces the risk of eviction due to rental arrears. The final criterion is that clients must agree to one year of follow-up supports.

Follow-up workers meet regularly with clients in their new homes and assist with the often difficult transition from life on the street by linking them to resources in their new

community, helping them to develop needed life skills, as well as helping to prevent eviction by ensuring rent is paid and mediating between clients and landlords to resolve any issues with the tenancy. Follow-up support workers help clients to set individual goals and develop a reasonable plan to achieve them. This may involve addressing health and addiction issues, learning to manage finances, learning to cook and grocery shop, finding volunteer work, or planning to go back to school or work.

The focus of the follow-up supports is not just on the client, but also on the community where the person is housed. Follow-up workers develop ongoing relationships with landlords or superintendents and work to troubleshoot any issues before they turn into reasons to consider eviction. Follow-up workers also assist in hosting community events and focus on community development in the areas where their clients live, because a place that feels welcoming is a place where a person is inclined to stay.

A recent survey of clients housed through the Streets to Homes program demonstrates that clients have a high level of satisfaction with the services they received and with their housing, and have seen dramatic improvements in their quality of life since moving in. Appendix A provides further details.

2. Description and Key Findings of the 2007 Panhandling Pilot Project

The 2007 Pilot Project built on the Streets to Homes Program and provided a social service response to people who were housed and panhandling lawfully to try and help them with their needs so they would not need to panhandle. The project was delivered by 10 City staff and funded from within existing resources. The project operated for 12 weeks, from July until the end of September, in the area bounded by Spadina, Jarvis, Yorkville and Queen's Quay. The service was provided by having City staff present on the streets in the downtown and pro-actively offering supports to people who were housed and panhandling during two shifts: from 7am to 3pm and 2pm until 10pm, Tuesday through Saturday.

The Pilot area was divided into four quadrants. The north-south divide was Dundas and the east-west divide was Yonge Street. The same staff person worked the same quadrant for the same shift each day all summer, to become the local expert in their service area and to build familiarity with business operators, employees and residents within the area.

The social service response was developed in consultation with the Street Outreach Steering Committee, and with a number of business organizations, including the Toronto Entertainment District Association, the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, the St. Lawrence Market Business Improvement Area, and the Bloor-Yorkville Business Improvement Area.

There were five key components to the 2007 Pilot Project:

- a. Needs Assessment (initial survey)
- b. Engagement and Case Management

- c. Focus Group
- d. Interviews with Business Operators
- e. Public Education and Training

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment was a survey conducted in the first week of the Pilot (the week of July 9, 2007) with all 233 different people panhandling within the study area at that time. The purpose of the survey was to understand the demographics of the panhandling population, their housing status, their service use patterns, income sources and characteristics of their panhandling activity. All people panhandling were included in the survey component of the Pilot regardless of whether they were housed or homeless, and regardless of whether they were panhandling legally or illegally, as defined by the *Safe Streets Act*. Participants in the survey received a \$10 gift certificate.

General Observations

Most people panhandling (81 per cent) were doing so alone. In 2 per cent of cases, there were one or more children present with the panhandler and in 7 per cent of cases the person panhandling had a pet with them.

Most often (66 per cent of the time) the person panhandling was sitting while panhandling. Most frequently (39 per cent of the time) the person was verbally soliciting for money while in other instances, they used a sign, but did not verbally solicit (17 per cent), neither used a sign nor verbally solicited (22 per cent), or were engaged in other activity, such as door opening, but were not using a sign or asking for money (21 per cent). In 18 per cent of situations the person panhandling was disrupting the flow of pedestrian traffic and in 8 per cent of situations the person panhandling was disrupting the flow of vehicular traffic. In less than 1 per cent of cases was there substantial litter or debris near the location of the panhandling.

Regarding frequency of panhandling, there were some individuals (51 per cent of survey respondents) who had a set panhandling routine regarding days of the week, time of the day and location(s). For others (49 per cent of survey respondents), panhandling was a completely unplanned random event undertaken to meet an immediate need, without significant forethought and with no idea when it may occur again (e.g. realized when out for a walk that they were out of cigarettes and had no money, so panhandled to get enough money to buy cigarettes and then immediately stop panhandling).

Panhandling most often occurred on major thoroughfares within the catchment area (e.g. Yonge Street) or near entertainment venues (e.g. near theatres and nightclubs). Appendix B has a map indicating where people who were panhandling were encountered. Staff observed 8 locations on 12 occasions to see how panhandling occurred over a 7-hour period at 1 location. Assuming \$2 per donation (the average staff were told is provided) people panhandling were making between \$20 and \$25 per 7 hours of panhandling.

Panhandling was most likely to occur when there were spikes of pedestrian traffic on the street: morning rush hour, noon hour, when most people are ending their work-day later in the afternoon, and in the evening when people are out. Evenings were the busiest panhandling period, and most of this activity occurred in the Entertainment District.

Demographics

On average, people who panhandled were 37.9 years of age. Twenty-one per cent of the people encountered during the survey were under the age of 25, and 11 per cent were 55 years of age or older. Eighty-three per cent were male and 17 per cent were female. Approximately a quarter (23 per cent) self-identified as being Aboriginal.

Panhandling Activities

On average, survey respondents reported panhandling 5.7 days per week, with 66 per cent indicating that the number of days that they panhandled per week did not change depending on the time of the month. Most people panhandling (69 per cent) had more than one location where they panhandled.

On average, people reported panhandling for 6.7 hours per day. More than half of survey respondents (57 per cent) panhandled at specific times of the day.

On average, people reported that they had been panhandling for 14.5 years. This average figure is influenced by the fact that 11 per cent of people panhandling had been doing so for 20 years or more. Fifty per cent of survey respondents, however, had been panhandling for less than five years. The median length of time panhandling was, therefore, three years.

Each person panhandling was presented with a range of reasons why they panhandle. They could select more than one option.

Are you panhandling to:	No.	%
Eat/buy food of your choice	211	91
Buy cigarettes	152	65
Help with other daily living expenses	141	61
Socialize with people	107	46
Buy alcohol	107	46
Buy drugs	102	44
Help support friends/family	50	22
Get enough money to go home/move out of Toronto	47	20
Pay off debts	46	20
Pay the rent	19	8
Save up for first or last months rent	18	8
Other	26	11
Response Rate = 100%		

While socializing was the aspect of panhandling survey respondents liked best (49 per cent), negative reactions from the public was the aspect they liked least (48 per cent).

What do you like best about panhandling?	No.	%
Socializing	102	49
Don't like panhandling	61	29
Increased income	36	17
Self fulfillment	9	4
Response Rate = 89%		

What do you like least about panhandling?	No.	%
Negative reactions from public	98	48
Unfavourable conditions	35	17
Degrading, lower self-esteem	34	17
Minimal returns	17	8
Nothing	10	5
Everything	9	4
Response Rate = 87%		

The majority of panhandlers surveyed (79 per cent) indicated that they wanted to quit panhandling, with employment (32 per cent) noted as the main thing that would help them (or that would allow them) to quit. Of those who were homeless and panhandling, 70 per cent indicated their panhandling would decrease once housed.

Income Sources and Employment

Sources of income were varied, and most respondents reported having two or more sources of income. As the table below demonstrates, not all people encountered during the survey considered what they were doing to be panhandling, even though they were surveyed because they were soliciting money from people.

Over the past month, which of the following have been a source of income for you:	No.	%
Panhandling	181	78
ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program)	51	22
OW (Ontario Works)	50	22
Street Allowance (the Basic Needs portion of OW for people with no fixed address)	45	19
Family/friends	27	12
PNA (Personal Needs Allowance: the Basic Needs portion of OW for people staying in shelters less food costs)	19	8
Employment - Formal or informal	17	7
CPP (Canadian Pension Plan)	6	3
EI (Employment Insurance)	5	2
OAS (Old Age Security)	3	1
GIS (Guaranteed Income Supplement)	1	1
Other	8	3
Response Rate = 100%		

Of those that had a job, most often they were working one job and that job was more likely to be casual employment (day labour) than steady employment.

Almost 6 out of 10 respondents were not currently looking for employment, and on average it had been 3 years since they last had a job.

Almost half (45 per cent) of all survey respondents felt that they were eligible for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), yet of these respondents, only 20 per cent had ever applied for ODSP previously and all were unsuccessful.

Housing Status

Most (72 per cent) people panhandling who were surveyed were homeless, and these individuals were most frequently staying in a shelter or a park. They had been homeless on average for 2.2 years.

More than three quarters (77 per cent) of homeless people panhandling want to get into permanent housing; yet, 60 per cent were not on a waiting list for housing and only 40 per cent were receiving help from an agency to get housing.

The majority (70 per cent) indicated that if they were housed their panhandling would decrease. This finding is consistent with the Streets to Homes Post-Occupancy survey results detailed in Appendix A.

For those that were housed, the majority were living in social housing or alternative housing, both of which have rents geared to income. Including utilities, the average rent of all people housed was \$375.49.

What type of housing are you living in?	No.	%
Social	28	44
Private Market	24	38
Alternative	10	16
Owned	1	2
Response Rate = 100%		

A large majority (87 per cent) of housed people who were panhandling had been homeless at some point in the past. This finding demonstrates a strong link to homelessness, regardless of whether the person was homeless at the time of being surveyed.

The survey included questions to learn if those panhandling were living elsewhere in the City or outside the City, and were coming downtown to panhandle. Most frequently the person was living downtown or in close proximity to downtown.

What general area of the city do you live in?	No.	%
Toronto/East York	52	83
Scarborough	7	11
Etobicoke	2	3
North York	0	0
Live outside the city	2	3
Response Rate = 100%		

While two-thirds (67 per cent) did not feel they were at risk of losing their housing, respondents reported that they did frequently run out of money at the end of the month for food (78 per cent) or other living expenses (91 per cent).

Most (62 per cent) housed people who were panhandling had received assistance from an agency in finding their current housing.

Services Used

The three most frequently used services by people who were panhandling were drop-in centres, street outreach and shelters. This is consistent with the survey finding that the majority of people surveyed were homeless.

Have you used any of the following services in the past 6 months?	No.	%
Drop-ins	152	65
Vans/street outreach	148	64
Shelters	127	55
Meals at Out of the Cold	113	49
Food bank or community kitchen	103	44
Health clinics	103	44
Beds at Out of the Cold	94	40
Hospital/Emergency room	92	40
Services that help you get identification	86	37
Street Helpline	84	36
Harm reduction programs	54	23
Housing help centre	50	22
Detox	38	16
Legal clinics	35	15
Job training/job supports	28	12
Other	23	10
Response Rate = 100%		

Key Findings from the Needs Assessment

Three quarters of all people who panhandle that were encountered during the pilot were homeless. Of the one quarter that were housed, 87 per cent had experienced homelessness at some point in the recent past.

While people panhandling appreciated the social interaction, they also loathed having to panhandle and some of the negative comments they received as a result of it.

Those people surveyed who were homeless and panhandling indicated their panhandling would decrease if housed.

Engagement and Case Management

The purpose of engagement and case management was to understand why the person was panhandling and then to identify and implement strategies to help them stop panhandling. This included activities such as connecting them to income supports, helping them meet their health needs, assisting them in returning to their home community if they wanted to leave Toronto and/or connecting them to other community services such as meal programs. Engagement and case management occurred with all 110 people encountered on the street who met the project criteria: housed and panhandling. Sixty-three (63) of these people were identified during the initial survey phase of the project, with an additional 47 eligible people encountered throughout the other 12 weeks of the Pilot. Of the 110, all but 3 wanted assistance so they could stop panhandling.

The process of assisting the person to stop panhandling began with a thorough assessment of their unique needs: why they were panhandling; income; housing; health, mental health and addiction issues; food security, etc. A service plan was developed for each client identifying timelines and anticipated goals of the service response. The community worker would then help connect the individual to the services most likely to address these identified needs. This usually meant physically accompanying the client to appointments or to locations where services were provided.

This intensive social service response proved to be successful. Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of clients stopped panhandling during the 12 weeks of the Pilot. In 47 per cent of cases the person stopped panhandling in three visits or less. Appendix C provides some brief case summaries of the types of interventions that proved to be effective and why.

There were 37 per cent of clients who met the mandate of the program who did not stop panhandling during the pilot. Almost all of these individuals had concurrent disorders (mental health and substance use issues), were living in subsidized housing and were receiving their maximum allowable income benefits. Sixteen per cent of those who stopped panhandling had similar characteristics, but required a significant investment of time to resolve their issues. This suggests that had the pilot been extended, it may have been possible to meet the service needs of more of this group.

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted with 12 of the 41 people (37 per cent) who did not stop panhandling to better understand why they panhandle, why the pilot was not meeting their needs, and what would need to be done (if anything) for them to cease panhandling.

Focus group participants indicated that after the rent was paid, they need an additional \$600-700 per month to live on. None of them believed they could stop panhandling and live on their existing income. They expressed a desire to earn money without their social assistance cheques being affected, and thought their budgeting and financial needs would improve if they received their social assistance cheques every two weeks instead of the once-a-month approach that is currently used.

This group expressed that the social aspects of panhandling were important and that they want programs that offer socialization with others, but not necessarily in a drop-in. While they were often aware of opportunities for free food, they panhandled to have choice in the food they eat. This group was generally of the opinion that services are not easily accessible.

When asked what would happen if they had to stop panhandling or if there was a by-law prohibiting panhandling, this group felt that if they stopped panhandling their criminal offences will increase. All of them also indicated that if there was a by-law stating that they could not panhandle, they would still continue to panhandle anyway.

Interviews with Business Operators

Interviews were conducted with eight business operators within the project area. The intent was to understand their impressions of panhandling, with a particular focus on those panhandlers who opened doors for business customers and described their activity as being “service providers” rather than “panhandlers”.

Overwhelmingly the managers at these businesses were most concerned about the person opening the door getting the services they need to have their needs met. These managers wanted to know that the person was going to be okay, and expressed that they sometimes got concerned when they did not see a regular door holder.

These business operators also pointed out that they did not believe that police were the best response to these types of situations. They were supportive of a social service response. As outlined later in the report, this view was consistent with views expressed by the business community during the consultations.

Public Education and Training

The public education and training component was intended to provide information on services available to homeless and low-income people in Toronto, and provide training to staff of businesses in the pilot area on homelessness and panhandling and appropriate responses to each.

At the request of downtown Business Improvement Areas, four operators and the Toronto Entertainment District Association, a small brochure suitable for lobby displays on “Helping Homeless People in Toronto: 10 Things That You Should Know” was prepared during the Pilot project and over 50,000 were distributed. The initial brochure has also since gone on to be adapted for publication inserts used by entertainment operators such as Roy Thompson Hall. A copy of the brochure is attached as Appendix D.

Offers to provide staff training were made to a range of business stakeholders in the downtown area. Several groups expressed interest. One group accepted the offer. Their staff were provided with a one hour training session on homelessness and panhandling issues and responses to these issues.

Each of the consultation sessions held over the last year was also used as an opportunity to provide public education to leaders within these organizations on homelessness and panhandling. Many in the business community were pleasantly surprised by the range of services offered to people who were homeless and particularly by the Streets to Homes Program and its effectiveness in helping house people directly from the street. Many stakeholders are not aware of the good work done by the City and its community partners and therefore there is a need for additional public education activities.

3. **Consultations with Business Improvement Areas, Hotels, Major Attractions Operators and Residents' and Ratepayers' Associations**

Executive Committee instructed staff to consult with business and ratepayers' associations on developing a "holistic approach that addresses the panhandling concerns of business while maintaining the rights and dignity of the urban poor".

Several consultations occurred during the set-up, delivery and conclusion of the 2007 Pilot, as part of developing the proposed enhanced service strategy outlined later in this report.

More frequent meetings were held with the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, Bloor-Yorkville Business Improvement Area, St. Lawrence Business Improvement Area and the Toronto Entertainment District Association. In addition, there were three consultation meetings held in January 2008 with representatives from 20 Business Improvement Areas and 18 hotel and major tourism attractions operators.

In summary, the consultations indicated:

- A great deal of interest in and frustration with the panhandling issue together with genuine concern for people who are street involved, especially those who appear to have mental health issues;
- Strong support for a social service response to address legal panhandling, not an enforcement or by-law response;
- A general consensus that panhandling should not be a police issue, but that there does need to be some type of response, especially for people with addictions and mental health issues;
- Strong support for the outcomes of the pilot project in reducing the needs of people to panhandle;
- Strong support for increased funding for services to address panhandling, as long as the funding delivers concrete results;
- A need for one phone number they could call to have an outreach team attend or to have someone provide advice;
- A need for outreach team services in the early morning, during the day and well into the night after entertainment establishments close;
- Support for a wider public education campaign that makes Torontonians aware of services available to homeless people and that the campaign should have a positive tone;

- Some support for donation boxes as part of a broader strategy, but not for refurbished parking meters;
- A desire by many BIAs and some tourism venues to get involved in providing employment to people who panhandle, so long as they are supported in creating the jobs and managing the individuals;
- Support for changes to rules that make it difficult for people to transition from social assistance to work;
- Interest in supporting advocacy efforts to other orders of government; and
- Support for amendments to the *Safe Streets Act* such as including a prohibition against soliciting to people entering or exiting a place of public assembly or those waiting in line to get into such a place.

A survey was also sent by mail to all 144 Community Associations registered with the City Clerk's office and that have given consent to public disclosure of their contact information. Only 10 responses were received (7 per cent response) which is not enough to be considered representative. Generally speaking, of those who did respond, there was a range of opinion between those who believe panhandling is a very important issue for their neighbourhood and those who do not feel it is a major concern. Those who responded recommended a range of actions to be taken by the City, including greater enforcement of illegal panhandling, more outreach and social service to assist people on the street, and more addiction and mental health supports. They also recommended that the Province contribute to addressing the issue by increasing funding for social services, mental health programs and affordable housing.

4. **Enhanced Streets to Homes Service to Address the Needs of People Who Are Street Involved Including Those Who Panhandle**

In its current form, Streets to Homes is designed to work with individuals who are homeless and living outdoors. Not served by the current Streets to Homes program are individuals who are housed and panhandle in a legal manner and shelter users who spend the majority of their day involved in street behaviours, including panhandling, away from shelters. The current approach to service delivery, although highly successful in helping homeless people from the streets get housed, results in some street involved persons not getting the services they need to stop being street involved.

The proposed enhanced service is a combination of the practices employed by Streets to Homes with the practices employed by the 2007 Pilot Project, to provide an expanded service throughout public spaces in the City, with a focus on the downtown core to help all street involved people to find and keep suitable housing and to address other needs that will assist them to stop panhandling.

The 2007 panhandling pilot provided several valuable lessons:

- An intensive social service response is effective: almost two-thirds of people who were housed and legally panhandling stopped panhandling during the course of the pilot and most of the homeless people surveyed indicated they would stop panhandling if they were housed.
- A seasonal based program has negative impacts at the conclusion of the season as people whose case plan was still in progress were left with no resolution to their needs. A seven day per week, year round program would be more effective in this regard and would allow a larger number of individuals to be served more consistently.
- Continuity of service in a specific geographic area yielded positive results for local knowledge and service outcomes. Throughout the pilot, the same staff were in the same quadrant of the downtown core for the same shift each day. This meant that the visible staff walking through that catchment area got to know several business operators and residents in the area, and also were able to monitor and implement local changes to panhandling in the area. Most importantly, this familiar presence in the area allowed workers to detect newcomers to the area and implement a social service response prior to the person becoming entrenched in street involved activity.
- While several clients expressed a desire to achieve employment, assessing their work ability and linking to employment programs within the summer pilot was difficult. During the pilot there was no specific employment program available or customized to the needs of the clients being served. The proposed enhanced service meets this need by allowing sufficient time to connect those people interested in achieving employment with appropriate, dedicated services to help make this a reality. The business community has already commented that they will assist in looking for employment opportunities for individuals who want to work.
- Unlike the Streets to Homes program, the pilot did not have access to specialized mental health and addictions supports. The pilot would have been more effective in serving individuals with health and/or addictions issues if specialized services had been available.

The proposed enhanced service is also supported by the research conducted with people housed through the Streets to Homes program. The Post-Occupancy research in Appendix A showed that many people who previously panhandled stopped panhandling once they were housed. Given that most of the survey respondents who were homeless in the pilot also indicated that they would stop panhandling if they were housed, there is much evidence to support a link between housing people and reduced panhandling.

Overview of Enhanced Streets to Homes Service

The proposed enhanced services will address the housing and service needs of all street involved persons in the downtown, with two mobile services to address legal panhandling outside the downtown core. “Street involved” includes people who are homeless and living outdoors, people who stay in shelters at night but spend large amounts of their day on the street, and people who are housed and panhandling legally. The downtown for the purpose of this service is the area from Bathurst to Parliament, Yorkville to Lake Ontario, which is larger than the pilot project area in order to include a key service corridor to the east and west of the downtown.

It is proposed that the service operate 7 days per week, with a minimum of two shifts per day. Commencing in 2009, a third shift will be added from May 1 until October 31 to address seasonal increases in street involved activity.

A single phone number would be created for the service so that staff can respond to calls concerning people who are street involved in the downtown core. Staff will respond with a social service approach as timely as operationally possible, most often within four hours. All outcomes will be tracked; however, personal identifying information and outcomes cannot be relayed to the caller without signed consent to do so on the part of the person assisted.

The downtown core would again be divided into four quadrants, in the same way as was done for the pilot. Frontline staff involved with the enhanced service will be identifiable to the general public and the clients they serve as City employees.

To respond to the need to address panhandling outside the downtown core, it is proposed that there be two mobile teams available for each shift. One team would work in specific areas outside of the downtown where panhandling has been identified as a significant concern to the community. The other team would travel throughout the City in response to service calls, but will not actively seek their own clients.

The proposed enhanced street outreach service will also allow for the ability to meet special needs of youth. It is commonly accepted that street involved youth have different needs and require a different service response than adults. For this reason, the proposed enhanced model includes an additional two youth specific counsellors available to meet the needs of youth.

The past three years of Streets to Homes have also clearly demonstrated that an investment in supports to keep people housed is a prudent investment. With the proper supports, people regain life stability and work towards long-term independent living, fully integrated into their new community. The proposed enhanced service approach increases the availability of follow-up supports to people housed through the initiative.

Community Partnerships to Support the Enhanced Service

The City partners with many non-profit agencies to deliver the Streets to Homes service. Although most of these programs will continue unchanged, the enhanced service outlined in this report will impact some of these services in different ways, namely:

- An expansion of the Streets to Homes Mobile Multi-Disciplinary Street Outreach approach to help people with mental health and/or addictions issues access the treatment they need and housing. The service would use a range of health care professionals such as psychiatric, nursing, clinical case management and concurrent disorder therapy.
- An expansion of the employment support program to assist street involved individuals in realizing their employment capability and potential.
- An expansion of a moving and furniture service through a non-profit agency to assist in helping turn apartments into a home with all of the furnishings they need.
- A reprofiling of funding and service delivery of agencies that receive funding for outreach and information services that currently operate in the catchment area outlined in this report. Staff will work with these agencies to, wherever possible, re-align their services to support the enhanced service.

In addition to these funded partnerships, the City also has partnerships with other service providers including shelters and drop-in centres and income support programs.

The enhanced street outreach service will build upon the partnerships that Streets to Homes and its partnering agencies have already developed with select drop-ins where housing assistance is provided by Streets to Homes within the drop-in setting. As the most frequently used service amongst people who panhandle and homeless people, drop-in centres are important partners to ensure ongoing success of addressing the needs of street involved persons. Over time, additional partnership opportunities with drop-ins will be developed.

The enhanced street outreach service will also build upon the partnerships that Streets to Homes and its partnering agencies have already developed with select shelters. The enhanced service will encourage the use of shelters; ensure, whenever possible, non-duplication of service between shelter housing workers and Streets to Homes housing workers; work in partnership with the Assessment and Referral Centre to ensure street homeless individuals seeking overnight respite are served in a coordinated manner; and, maximize the use of specialized resources that exist in various shelters.

Ongoing work with these service providers will be undertaken with a view to making further improvements towards the integration of services for street involved people.

The enhanced street outreach service will also build upon the partnerships that Streets to Homes and its partnering agencies have developed with Toronto Social Services (Ontario Works) and the Ontario Disability Support Program given the critical importance of income supports for the population to be served.

Overview of Changes from Existing Streets to Homes Service to the Enhanced Service

	Current Streets to Homes	Proposed Enhanced Service
<i>Type of Client Served</i>	Homeless and living outdoors	Street Involved, which includes: - homeless and living outdoors, - shelter users who hang out or panhandle outdoors and - housed people that are panhandling in a lawful manner
<i>Hours of Service</i>	8am-6pm	7am-10pm (proposed), longer from May through October
<i>Direct Service Shifts Per Day</i>	1	2; 3 from May through October
<i>Days of Service</i>	5, Monday-Friday	7 days per week
<i>Service Area</i>	Entire City	Entire City with enhanced service in the area bounded by Bathurst to Parliament, Yorkville to the Lake, with two mobile services available for outside the downtown
<i>Central Phone Number?</i>	No	Yes
<i>Focus of Service</i>	Housing Access and Stability	Housing Access and Stability, including emphasis on employment and enhanced mental health/addictions support

Costs of the Enhanced Service

The proposed enhanced service represents a significant enhancement to the current Streets to Homes Program; the additional costs required to run it are also significant.

The above chart shows the proposed enhanced service serves a broader range of people who are street involved, operates more hours per day and more days per week. The enhanced service also includes additional mobile teams, a new central phone number and additional employment and follow-up services. The enhanced service also increases City staff outreach presence on the street. The costs for 2008, including start up costs, are estimated at \$2.577M and the annual costs for 2009 and beyond are estimated at \$4.973M.

5. Practices Used in Other Jurisdictions to Address Panhandling

Executive Committee directed that staff research and identify specific methods used by other Canadian cities to curb panhandling. The results of this research are presented in Appendix E with jurisdictional programs identified. The experience of other jurisdictions helped inform the development of the proposed enhanced service in Toronto.

Typically there are six main program responses to address panhandling, which have been used in other jurisdictions. A summary of each is presented below:

Public Education and Alternative Giving

Public Education campaigns can serve several purposes. Some focus on homelessness and the responses available. Others focus on panhandling, why it exists and what can be done to address it. Others are more broadly aimed at educating people on poverty related issues.

Research on the impacts of Public Education campaigns tend to demonstrate that informing the general public what they can do about a situation rather than telling them what they cannot do is more beneficial. For example, a Public Education campaign encouraging the general public to give funds to organizations that work with homeless people will be better received and result in more action than a campaign that says, “Do not give money to panhandlers.”

Alternate Giving campaigns, which generally form part of a broader Public Education strategy, encourage people to give to a charitable organization rather than giving to panhandlers. Collection methods tend to include things like donation boxes or refurbished parking meters. The experience of other jurisdictions is that alternative giving campaigns can be publicly controversial. Moreover, there is little research available on the impact of these campaigns on giver or panhandler behaviour, and the research that is available is not conclusive and is mainly qualitative in nature. Lastly, it is the experience of some jurisdictions who have implemented refurbished parking meters that funds raised do not cover the installation and operating/monitoring costs of the refurbished parking meters. For example, the spare change meters in Kamloops collected just over \$800 in six years of operation. Other locations, such as Edmonton, have removed its refurbished parking meters after several months because of issues with vandalism. However, places like Denver feel they are useful for education purposes, even if collections are small.

In light of the shortcomings and inconclusive results of alternative giving, staff will be developing a public education campaign that does not include a “Don’t Give to Panhandlers” component. Staff will not be pursuing the establishment of refurbished parking meters or “compassion” meters as part of any public education campaign. Staff will, however, develop a campaign that informs Toronto residents, businesses, visitors and commuters of places where they can donate money in order to assist people who panhandle and other street involved persons.

Social Service Responses

This is the approach used in the 2007 Pilot Project. The Social Service Response approach offers panhandlers services to address the underlying problems that cause them to panhandle. To achieve this goal requires the addition of new resources, usually in the form of increased street outreach or creation of new programs to meet particular needs. In all jurisdictions examined, these programs have demonstrated reductions in panhandling, though none have yet completely eliminated panhandling.

The Social Service Response approach puts a strong emphasis on coordination between existing social service programs. The intent is not to take away resources from one part of the system to fund another. Nor is the intent to duplicate service efforts or provide service in silos. Instead, the focus is on achieving service integration and client outcomes.

Judicial or Policing Responses

Innovative judicial responses to street crime prosecution through modified sentencing requirements and social service referrals have been implemented in some jurisdictions to address the underlying issues that cause the street crime behaviour. For example, San Diego's Homeless Court Program (HCP) has served as a model for several dozen jurisdictions in the US which now have similar programs. The HCP is a special Superior Court session held monthly at local shelters for homeless defendants to resolve outstanding misdemeanor criminal cases. The HCP is intended to counteract the effect of criminal cases pushing homeless defendants further outside society, by using a progressive plea bargain system and alternative sentencing structure, whereby participants are required to participate in shelter services and do volunteer work as part of their sentence. An evaluation of the program found that 80% of participants had no post-hearing criminal activity. Staff will be following up further with San Diego on specific program elements with a view to potentially replicating elements in the Canadian/Ontario context. In this regard, it is recommended that the Province be requested to consider a Diversion Court or other alternative judicial response for panhandling offences to achieve community service and community benefits rather than levying people with fines they are frequently unable to pay.

In other settings, there have been increased police responses to panhandling. This may include the blitz of a particular area or type of street involved activity for which there are existing laws or by-laws to curtail the activity. The impact of these efforts does not seem to necessarily impact panhandling behaviour on a City wide level, though they may curtail the activity in a particular area for a period of time.

Employment Programs

Employment programs to address panhandling often provide temporary or casual employment as an alternative to panhandling. A small number of programs provide links to more formal employment at the end of the program.

What is necessary in employment programs is to provide sufficient retraining and psycho-vocational assessment so that the individual can work on life skills and ongoing employability. These types of programs are generally expensive. For example, the Mission off the Streets program in Winnipeg had a budget of \$80,000 for a six month pilot with a target of serving 12 people at a time.

In the Toronto context, the business community in consultations has indicated a desire to help find suitable employment opportunities for people who were previously panhandling, subject to the provision of supports to individuals to help them transition to work.

Public Safety Guides or Street Ambassadors

The purpose of public safety guides or street ambassadors varies greatly between jurisdictions. In some places the intent is to actively discourage panhandling. In other locations the intent is to provide street outreach and social service referrals. In other locations the intent is to provide information to tourists and members of the general public. Most often these initiatives are led and funded by Business Improvement Areas.

These types of initiatives tend to be staff intensive. For example, Seattle has more than 60 ambassadors on its downtown streets, and the Downtown Watch Program in Winnipeg has 88 people involved through a combination of paid staff and volunteers.

Environmental or Situational Responses

Environmental or Situational Responses are changes to the physical environment to discourage panhandling behaviours through landscaping, streetscaping, regulating particular types of alcohol sales (e.g. cooking wine) or other types of environmental design. For example, in Vancouver the Grandview Woodland Community Policing Centre sponsored changes in environmental design that resulted in property owners securing places where people who had been squeegeeing cars were storing their buckets; had gas station owners engrave their squeegee equipment to deter theft; removed newspaper boxes where inebriated persons were known to hide their bottles; and alcoves around some buildings were gated to make it impossible for panhandlers to have a place to sit down.

An example of a Situation Response is the promotion of alternate use of public spaces such as licensing entertainers to perform where panhandlers used to be. This has been done in Calgary where they have promoted licensed buskers to help manage vending and solicitation.

6. Canadian By-laws to Address Panhandling

Executive Committee instructed staff to examine by-laws in Canadian jurisdictions and report back on the specific by-laws.

This staff report is recommending a social service response to address panhandling, not a by-law. Therefore the following is provided for information.

Appendix F contains a chart detailing every jurisdiction where City staff received confirmation of a specific by-law being in effect to address panhandling. The existence of these by-laws and the active status of the by-law was confirmed by the city clerks in each of these municipalities. Furthermore, City staff also looked at Provincial legislation that impacts panhandling within Canadian municipalities.

There are several important considerations in the discussion of by-laws and panhandling:

- A by-law cannot infringe upon the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* nor violate the *Constitution*.
- Municipalities do not have authority in enforcing their by-laws to affect one's person including arresting, detaining or using force.
- The City of Toronto derives its powers to enact by-laws from the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* but in order to use its powers must demonstrate a relationship between the activity sought to be regulated or prohibited and the power on which it relies, and there are no statutory provisions which expressly give the City authority to enact by-laws for the purposes of prohibiting panhandling.
- In Ontario, the *Safe Streets Act, 1999 (SSA)* is provincial legislation that outlines when soliciting is illegal and is the legal framework for addressing illegal solicitation in Toronto and the basis upon which police exercise their powers to address illegal panhandling. No municipality in Ontario has the right to pass by-laws that would supersede or conflict with Provincial legislation.

By-laws and legislation about panhandling in other parts of Canada are relatively consistent with Ontario's Safe Streets Act in that they tend to include one or more of the following: time of day restrictions (e.g. no panhandling at night); specific area restrictions (e.g. no panhandling by bank machines); aggressive panhandling (e.g. no coercion); obstruction (e.g. no interfering with traffic while panhandling); and inclusion of a specific fine.

British Columbia cities tend to be taking the most aggressive approach to dealing with panhandling by passing their own by-laws in addition to provincial legislation, and through enforcement responses. City staff have found no empirical evidence about the effectiveness of by-laws and legislation in reducing panhandling.

7. Enforcement of the *Safe Streets Act* and Other Offences

Many of the deputations before Executive Committee in May 2007 detailed incidents of illegal or aggressive panhandling and their impact on the deputant and other victims, negative impacts on local businesses and on visitors to Toronto.

One of the issues with panhandling and the law generally is that “panhandling” is often used to describe activities other than panhandling. Aggressive panhandling is illegal under the *Safe Streets Act*. Generally the behaviour is threatening. The moment it moves beyond threats to damage or a physical attack on person or property, moving onto private property to conduct the activity, taking of merchandise or food, etc. “panhandling” is the wrong description. What is occurring – and what was described by deputants - is better characterized as assault, trespassing, theft – behaviours which are already illegal. These are regulated by various other laws, and are the purview of the police.

In many of the consultations and meetings with stakeholders, participants expressed concern that the Toronto Police Service does not generally enforce the *Safe Streets Act* or other legislation that would decrease inappropriate street behaviour. However, the evidence is to the contrary: according to a report recently before the Police Services Board, charges under the *Safe Streets Act* have increased from 2,725 in 2004 to 10,584 in 2007, an increase of 288 per cent. The chart from the Police Services Board report is reproduced below.

***Safe Streets Act* Charges from 2004 to 2007**

Type of Offence (based on <i>Safe Streets Act</i> Wording)	2007	2006	2005	2004
Solicit in an aggressive manner	2,319	1,257	578	368
Solicit near ATM	831	490	313	216
Solicit near public toilet facility	52	28	20	12
Solicit near public transit stop	1,075	637	383	195
Solicit near public transit vehicle	106	73	56	20
Solicit near vehicle/parking lot	1,419	767	416	288
Solicit person in vehicle on roadway	4080	2805	1,843	1,488
Dispose of used condom/ needle/ syringe / broken glass in public place	276	183	100	39
Other SSA Charges	426	257	115	99
Total	10,584	6,497	3824	2725

Source: Toronto Police Services, 2008

What is the impact of the enforcement of the *Safe Streets Act*? The report to the Police Services Board concludes:

“...based on the available data, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions about the Services’ experience enforcing the law. It is difficult to conclude if the law has had an impact on the number of aggressive panhandlers or the frequency of unlawful

panhandling. Moreover, while the data show the classification of offences, they do not distinguish the exact nature and frequency of aggressive panhandling as defined by law, limiting any conclusions about the characteristics of aggressive panhandling. Finally, determinants of aggressive behaviour are difficult to discern from the data. Nevertheless, the data suggests the Service has found the Act to be of some use in addressing unlawful panhandling, and the data clearly demonstrate that the Service is paying attention to the problem.”

The number of outstanding payments of fines related to the *Safe Streets Act* is high. According to Court Services there were 16,437 *Safe Streets Act* charges issued from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007 with 12,292 or 75 per cent of the fines outstanding. It is reasonable to conclude that a key reason why payments are outstanding is that the people being charged lack the financial resources to pay the fines.

When individuals do not or cannot pay, such inactivity on the part of the person who has received the ticket only results in more court and police resources to resolve the unpaid ticket and results in increased administrative costs. Also, given that people often receive more than one ticket it would seem to indicate that the issuance of tickets is not necessarily a deterrent to the activity. One of the underlying premises to the recommendation of a social service response to address panhandling is that it will result in decreased demand on police and court services.

8. Root Causes of Street Begging

Executive Committee instructed staff to report back on the “root causes of street begging” and government policy changes and programs needed over the short and long term to overcome these root causes.

Street begging is not a new phenomenon and is inextricably linked to lack of income or the lack of an affordable home or both. This is supported by the finding that 75 per cent of all people who were panhandling surveyed in the pilot were homeless and, of the 25 per cent who had housing, 87 per cent of them had been homeless in the past.

Over the last 15 years there have been a range of actions taken by other orders of government that have made the lives of the most vulnerable in Ontario more precarious. These include reduction in social assistance rates, cancellation of major social housing programs and introduction of the *Tenant Protection Act*. While the current provincial government is reversing some of these actions and embarking on a poverty reduction and affordable housing agenda, the income and affordable housing deficit remains.

City Council has received several reports from the General Manager of Social Services, the General Manager of Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, the General Manager of Children’s Services and the Medical Officer of Health detailing the income, affordable housing and health deficits and recommending action on the part of the provincial and federal governments.

Concrete action by the other orders of government in response to recommendations previously made by Council would go a long way to reducing poverty, homelessness and panhandling in Toronto.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Streets to Homes Post-Occupancy Survey Summary
Appendix B – Map of Panhandling Locations
Appendix C – Case Studies of Effective Interventions
Appendix D – Helping Homeless People in Toronto Brochure
Appendix E – Programs Used in Other Jurisdictions
Appendix F – Table of Canadian Bylaws Restricting or Prohibiting Panhandling