Update on Emergency Shelter Services

Community Development & Recreation Committee
Two things are clear

• Beds are available across the system nightly
  – Few formal complaints regarding access to beds
  – Direction to all staff is never turn anyone away
  – Toronto Shelter Standards in place to ensure there is no overcrowding

• Persistent recent anecdotal reports to the contrary
Path forward

• **Improve service efficiency**
  – There are a number of things to be done immediately that will result in improved customer service, operational efficiency and better access to beds

• **Refocus the service system**
  – Systemic changes are coming, planning and consultations for which include discussions about the role, extent, and funding for emergency shelter
Where are we going?

Emergency Responses to Homelessness

Integrated Housing Stability Service System
Opportunity to transform the system

• 2013 is a year of transition with the introduction of CHPI

• Through consultation with service providers, service users and other community stakeholders, a Housing Stability Service Plan will be delivered for Council consideration in the fall of 2013

• This is the context for discussion of broader systemic issues during the spring and summer
Current shelter system capacity and role

- 3,836 permanent beds at 57 shelter locations
  - 1,315 beds at 9 directly operated locations
  - 2,521 beds at 48 community agency sites through purchase of service contracts

- Additional capacity
  - Up to 172 emergency spaces funded by the City at 18 locations to supplement permanent beds as needed
  - 75 spaces at University Settlement House on weekends
  - Average of 88 Out of the Cold program spaces per night during winter season
How to get a shelter bed

• Multiple points of access
  – Through 57 sites; Central Intake/311; in person at SHARC;
    community referral/ directly to Out of the Cold

• Tracking bed availability with SMIS
  – Real time; shows available beds; used by all City-funded
    shelters

• Intake, referral and admission to a shelter bed
  – An intake through SMIS is required any time a client
    requests a shelter bed
  – Worker identifies bed through SMIS and calls the shelter
    directly
  – Bed is held in the system until person arrives and is
    admitted to the shelter
Role of SHARC in the shelter system

• Provides housing services to people who are living outdoors, street-involved, or housed and panhandling.

• Four separate services; one location:
  – Street respite
  – Shelter referral
  – 40 Transition to Housing shelter beds
  – Walk-in housing services
Why people wait or sleep at the SHARC

- Some refuse shelter altogether; just want to rest
- Some want to stay in the respite rather than leave downtown
- Some don’t want to go to specific shelters where they may be referred or may have service restrictions in place that keep them from accepting
- Some present at the SHARC very late, very intoxicated, or under the influence of drugs; not appropriate to make a shelter referral
- Some are waiting for a bed to be made ready
Access issues within the system

- Intakes may not be completed as directed
- Transitional beds make up a majority of available beds each night
- Lag between discharge and making a bed available
Plans in place for near term improvement

- New protocols for communication to homeless people during emergencies
- Updating and re-issuing protocols related to service requests and referrals; training the front line
- RFP for an external third party to review bed access practices as part of overall quality assurance process
- Addressing lag between actual discharge and electronic discharge, fail to returns and no shows
- Assessing transitional programs to determine how to free up more beds for emergency shelter purposes
- Targeted housing allowances
- Waiting list pilot
Conclusion

• With a new funding model in place 2013 is a transition year

• Housing stabilization service plan under development

• Funding pressures in the housing services envelope

• Broad systemic questions and issues regarding the purpose and place of emergency shelters need to be addressed within an outcome focused, housing stability service system

• Appropriate place for these conversations is in the consultation and service planning process that will culminate in a report to City Council in fall 2013