

**Ward 10**

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Date: January 15, 2015

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee Members

From: Councillor James Pasternak

Re: Toward an Integrated Mental Wellness Strategy

Homelessness is an ongoing crisis in the City of Toronto: an excess of 5,000 people can be considered homeless on any given night.

Many homeless individuals struggle with barriers to vocation, education, and community integration. As well, they face challenges with discrimination related to race/ ethnicity, sexual orientation, and mental health issues.

Homeless individuals often report mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder. Homelessness can be short term, intermittent or persistent, but as the period of homelessness increases, pre-existing and developing mental health problems and disorders can worsen.

A great number of homeless people have concurrent disorders, such as substance abuse problems. Many also have mobility issues. Studies suggest that individuals with concurrent disorders are more likely to experience chronic homelessness and face challenges in receiving suitable care.

Recommendations:

That the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee as part of the *Improvements to the Shelter System* report with:

1. A workplan to develop an integrated strategy with potential funding sources indentified for:
 - a. Expanding supports available for residents in Toronto's shelter system experiencing mental illnesses, substance abuse or addiction issues.
 - b. Addiction and substance abuse interventions among residents in Toronto's shelter system.
 - c. A pilot project to assist residents in the City of Toronto's shelter system experiencing mental illnesses, substance abuse or addiction issues that would be designed to deliver measurable results.
2. A strategy to develop closer integration with community agencies that work with individuals experiencing mental illnesses, substance abuse or addiction issues, within the context of the provincial government's Plan to End Homelessness and Poverty Reduction Strategy.
3. Requests to the Federal and Provincial Ministers of Health for enhanced funding for programs for residents in the City of Toronto's shelters experiencing mental illnesses, substance abuse or addiction issues.

Sincerely,

James Pasternak
Councillor, Ward 10