

Supplementary Report: Update on Meeting with the Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness regarding Out of the Cold Service Expansion

Date: June 27, 2017

To: City Council

From: General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

Wards: All

SUMMARY

At the June 7, 2017 Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) meeting, the Committee considered item CD21.16 "Review of Current Winter Respite Services and Planning for the 2017/18 Winter Season." In the staff report, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) recommended a number of actions to improve Winter Respite Services, including an expansion of Out of the Cold services (OOTC) for the 2017-18 winter season. During Committee deputations the Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness (ICFH) raised their concerns about the proposed expansion of OOTC.

SSHA was directed by Committee to meet with the ICFH and report directly to City Council on the meeting's outcomes. This report responds to that request.

The meeting, held on June 13, 2017, was productive and resulted in a commitment to enhance supports such as food, cleaning and repairs at existing OOTC sites rather than expand the service.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

The enhanced supports contemplated in this report, such as food, cleaning and repairs at existing OOTC sites, would be accommodated through the additional funding that is recommended be made available in CD21.16 "Review of Current Winter Respite Services and Planning for the 2017/18 Winter Season" being considered by Council at its meeting of July 4, 5 and 6, 2017. Future financial impacts will be considered through the 2018 budget process.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of June 7, 2017, Community Development and Recreation Committee considered item CD21.16 "Review of Current Winter Respite Services and Planning for the 2017/18 Winter Season." The Committee requested that the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration convene a meeting with the Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness to review the concerns of deputants regarding expansion to the Out of the Cold program and report direct to Council for its meeting of July 4, 2017.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD21.16>

COMMENTS

CDRC directed SSHA to meet with representatives of the ICFH in response to concerns raised in their deputations at the June 7, 2017 committee meeting regarding the proposed expansion of Out of the Cold services for the 2017-18 winter season.

The Out of the Cold (OOTC) program is a seasonal winter overnight program that is delivered by inter-denominational faith-based groups across the City of Toronto between November and April, and is coordinated by Dixon Hall. OOTC has been operating for over 30 years through the work of dedicated volunteers.

On June 13, 2017, a meeting was held between members of SSHA's senior leadership team, including the General Manager, and four members of the ICFH representing OOTC sites across the city.

The meeting was very productive, giving ICFH an opportunity to share the challenges faced by the OOTC sites, especially given the high demand for service this past winter.

Current Challenges experienced by the Out of the Colds

The ICFH spoke of how the OOTCs want to be part of a proactive response to homelessness but do not want to be viewed as part of a long-term solution. The ICFH identified some key challenges they are experiencing:

- Building repairs due to the wear and tear of operating an overnight program.
- Increasing operating costs due to diminishing donor pools combined with the increased cost of food.
- Difficulty connecting OOTC guests to housing and health services.
- Limited direct engagement with the City.

Opportunities to Enhance the Services and Supports for OOTCs

In the meeting, ICFH confirmed that while there is no appetite to expand the OOTC program, there is support for the other recommendations currently before Council, including increasing the number of 24-hour winter respite drop-ins as well as increasing their operating period to cover the full cold weather season from November 15 to April 15.

SSHA acknowledges OOTC is an important element of the current cold weather response, however, that it cannot be viewed as a permanent solution during cold weather. Further, there will be no expansion of OOTC services this year, but the focus will be on enhancing supports, such as food, cleaning and repairs at existing OOTC sites. This enhancement would be accommodated within the additional funding that is recommended be made available in CD21.16 "Review of Current Winter Respite Services and Planning for the 2017/18 Winter Season" currently being considered by Council.

Next Steps

SSHA and the ICFH have committed to working together with Dixon Hall to implement the proposed enhancements to the OOTC program in the 2017-18 winter season. The service enhancements, with the other proposed changes to Winter Respite Services being considered by City Council, are an opportunity to improve the supports and services available to some of Toronto's most vulnerable residents while the City continues expanding the shelter system over the next several years.

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