



Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers
autorisés de l'Ontario

James Pasternak, Chair
Community Development and Recreation Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West, Suite A22
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Sent by email: cdrc@toronto.ca

April 12, 2017

RE: RNAO feedback for April 13, 2017 Community Development and Recreation Committee Meeting on Item 2017.CD19.11

Dear Councillor Pasternak and members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee,

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) would like to provide feedback to the committee in support of strengthening Toronto's emergency shelter system. Access to safe, affordable housing is a basic human rights and a fundamental determinant of health.

The July 2016 city council meeting adopted an across the board 2.6 per cent budget reduction target.¹ On February 15, 2017 city council approved the 2017 operating budget for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), including a reduction of 10.3 positions through attrition for an estimated savings of \$1.048 million.² Front line services that were affected include Homeless and Housing First Solutions service areas (i.e. health care, shelter programs, client and counselling services, food services, and street outreach), Social Housing System Management, and Housing Program Delivery.³ While the staff report identifies increasing shelter demand due to higher than normal refugee intakes,⁴ the fact is that demand for shelter services has been escalating since 2012.⁵ The daily shelter census figures regularly exceed 90 per cent, including April 11, 2017's overall occupancy rate of 94 per cent.⁶ Instead of cutting front line staffing in a service area that is already at capacity, the shelter system that serves Toronto's most vulnerable residents needs to be improved and strengthened.

RNAO urges Toronto City Council to:

1. Immediately reinstate the 10.3 front-line positions identified for removal from the SSHA budget.⁷
2. Develop a comprehensive strategy to maintain the front-line positions as the reinstatement was based on one-time gap funding that "may not be sustainable in the 2018 budget."⁸

3. Moving forward, city council must reject mandating across the board budget reduction targets. To be consistent with Toronto's vision as an inclusive city as outlined in Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy,⁹ all proposed budget cuts that affect equity-seeking groups must be evaluated with a health equity impact assessment before they are implemented.¹⁰
4. Implement the three recommendations presented to the April 13, 2017 meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee by Cathy Crowe and Claudia Wong:
 - a. Require SSHA to revise its estimates of shelter occupancy to include those spaces that are operated by the Out of the Cold program, overnight drop-in centres and emergency cooling and warming centres to increase accuracy of reported capacity.
 - b. Require SSHA to develop and implement an action plan, which requires opening of emergency shelters when there is a documented surge in demand. This plan should be implemented when occupancy of shelters, the Out of the Cold program, overnight drop-ins and emergency programs exceeds 90 per cent of available shelter beds.
 - c. Require SSHA to conduct an immediate and independent review of its Shelter Standards as per 2.4.5 of the Toronto Shelter Standards due the extraordinary crowding and increased demand for services documented this year.

We urge city council to act to make these recommendations a reality.

Warmest regards,



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO

¹ City of Toronto (2016). EX16.37 Budget Process--Budget Direction and Schedule. July 12, 13, 14, and 15, 2016.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EX16.37>

² City of Toronto (2017). *Staff report: Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA)*. March 30, 2017. Toronto: Author. 1-4.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-102528.pdf>

³ *Staff report: Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to SSHA*, 5-6

⁴ *Staff report: Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to SSHA*, 6-7.

⁵ City of Toronto (2016). *2016-2017 Winter Readiness and Update on Shelter Occupancy*. October 5, 2016.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-97132.pdf>

⁶ City of Toronto (2017). Daily Shelter Census, April 11, 2017.

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=4ec8c0e9f7301410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=c0aeab2cedfb0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

⁷ Staff report: *Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to SSHA*

⁸ Staff report: *Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to SSHA*, 3.

⁹ City of Toronto (2015). *To Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Toronto: Author.

https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Social%20Development,%20Finance%20&%20Administration/Strategies/Poverty%20Reduction%20Strategy/PDF/TO_Prosperty_Final2015-reduced.pdf

¹⁰ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (2012). *Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) Workbook*. Toronto: Author. <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/heia/docs/workbook.pdf>