
2022 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Allocation for Providing Free Menstrual and Incontinence Products in Shelters

Issue/Background:

- On January 18th, 2022, the Budget Committee requested the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration to prepare a Briefing Note showing the current allocation in their budget to continue provided free menstrual products for service users in City-funded shelters, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins; and what the cost to extend that service to non-city run shelters, and include incontinence supplies would be.
- On March 7, 2019 [City Council](#) approved an increase to SSHA's 2019 Operating Budget by \$222,359 gross and net for the provision of free menstrual products for service users in 76 City-funded shelters, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins. Since 2019, SSHA has included a total of \$222,359 annually in its base budget for the provision of free menstrual products for service users in these programs.
- On November 6, 2019, the Economic and Community Development Committee received a [report](#) from SSHA that described the results of consultations with operators of City-funded shelters, respite and drop-in centres, program participants, community stakeholders and menstrual equity advocates such as the Period Purse, on the access, distribution, the real costs of menstrual products and the feasibility of providing such products free of charge to low-income menstruators in Toronto.
- All shelter programs must meet the operating requirements set out in both the Toronto Shelter Standards (TSS) and the purchase of service contracts, and they are evaluated using a quality assurance review process. All 24-hour respite sites must meet the operating requirements set out in both the Toronto 24-Hour Respite Site Standards (TRS) and the purchase of service contracts. Both the TSS and TRS require service providers to provide hygiene products including menstrual and incontinence products to their clients (section 9.1.2 of TSS and section 7.1.2 of TRS). These products should be funded from within shelter programs existing operating budgets, along with other supplies and services required within the Toronto Shelter Standards.

- On November 30, 2019, SSHA issued a [directive](#) that amended standard 9.1.2 (a) and 9.1.2 (c) in the [Toronto Shelter Standards \(TSS\)](#) that would align the shelter standards related to menstrual products more closely with the [Toronto Respite Standards \(TRS\)](#), to provide increased client access to menstrual products. This directive also introduced that shelter services, 24-hour drop-ins, and respites will receive dedicated funding for menstrual products.

Key Points:

- Toronto's emergency shelter system serves equity-seeking groups including women, transgender, non-binary individuals and seniors.
- SSHA's 2022 Operating Budget includes a total of \$222,359 in funding for the provision of free menstrual products and equipment for service users in all directly operated and City-funded shelters, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins.
- SSHA's 2022 Operating Budget introduces a multi-year strategy that will enhance the overall service levels and operating budgets for the POS shelter system (total \$75 million, subject to Council approval). [The Homelessness Service Plan](#) approved by Council also included as an action to review the shelter funding model and identify resources needed through future Budget processes to address disparities between City operated and community providers and build organizational capacity among community shelter providers.
- As of January 24, 2022, there currently 2,124 women and transgender clients accessing City-funded shelters, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins. Based on an annual estimate of \$100 per person, the funding provided in SSHA's Operating Budget is sufficient to fully fund free of charge distribution of menstrual products within these services.
- To date, SSHA's Operating Budget has not included a dedicated budget line specific to the provision of incontinence products for service users in all City-funded shelters, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins. Operating budgets cover supplies including incontinence products.
- City sites vary significantly in the number of incontinence products needed, based on the client groups. The current estimated annual usage and cost of incontinence products at a sample of City-operated shelters is detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Estimated Annual Cost of Incontinence Products Used at City-operated Shelters

Site	Estimated Monthly Usage (units/month)	Approximate Annual Cost Per Site**
Scarborough Village Residence (Seniors)	1350	\$24,642.00
Seaton House	550	\$10,032.00
Women's Residence	90	\$1,641.60
Alexandra Hotel	30	\$547.20
129 Peter Street	16	\$291.84

- **Based on the assumption of \$1.52 cost per incontinence product
- Low income individuals, including people experiencing homelessness access a range of supports for purchasing incontinence products:
 1. Individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) can access funds for incontinence products through the Extended Health Benefit.
 2. Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) also provides discretionary funding for medical items including incontinence products.
 3. TESS administers a [Hardship Fund](#) (City-funded) for low-income Torontonians (including many seniors), where incontinence products are a commonly funded item.
- Based on SSHA's estimates from its directly operated sites, SSHA estimates that approximately up to \$250,000 would address the current spending for incontinence products across the shelter system. This amount is included and available within SSHA's proposed 2022 operating budget.
- SSHA will engage with providers and clients in 2022 to allocate this funding and identify any further resource gaps related to menstrual products and incontinence products through quality assurance assessments and client feedback at all City-funded shelter, 24-hour respite sites and 24-hour drop-ins.

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