![Toronto logo] **REPORT FOR ACTION**

Advancing the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) and the 2025 Shelter Infrastructure Plan – Supplementary Report

Date: June 25, 2024
To: City Council
From: General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This supplementary report provides additional context and detail on the process for program and operator selection for new shelters sites to be developed through the new Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS). This report builds on the *Advancing Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) and the 2025 Shelter Infrastructure Plan* staff report presented to Executive Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS), recommends that:
1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts associated with this supplementary report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on February 6, 2024, City Council adopted EC9.4 "Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy: Real Estate Strategy and Lease Extensions", granting authority to expedite the redevelopment of existing City-owned sites or acquiring new sites for permanent, purpose-built shelters. This includes securing at least five new shelter opportunities in 2024 and medium-term lease extensions at temporary shelters. https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC9.4

At its meeting on November 8, 2023, City Council adopted EC7.7 "Shelter Infrastructure Plan and the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS)", as the guiding Strategy for capital infrastructure spending decisions from 2024 - 2033 across the City of Toronto's shelter system. This plan includes transitioning the shelter system towards increased permanency and expanding shelter capacity to respond to sector specific needs. https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EC7.7

At its meeting on April 6, 2022, City Council adopted EC28.9 "COVID-19 Shelter Transition and Relocation Plan Update", which granted authorities required for lease and licence extensions at temporary shelter sites and services through until April 30, 2023. This Plan includes an overview of options to return base shelter capacity, including best practices outlined in the Shelter Design and Technical Guidelines. http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EC28.9

At its meeting on December 17, 2019, City Council adopted PH11.5 "HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan" as the framework to address Toronto's housing and homelessness challenges by 2030. This Plan includes a number of actions and targets to address critical needs across the housing spectrum including emergency shelters, social and supportive housing, market and affordable rental housing and home ownership. http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.PH11.5

At its meeting on December 5, 2017, City Council adopted CD24.7 "2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and Progress Report." Council approved the 2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and a new property development approach to siting shelters, and authorized the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, to approve specific sites for shelters, provided certain criteria are met. The report also provided information on the development of a New Shelter Service Model and best practice shelter design guidelines. http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD24.7

COMMENTS

Shelter System Pressures

As referenced in the *Advancing the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) and the 2025 Shelter Infrastructure Plan* staff report (EX15.3), Toronto is experiencing record levels of demand for emergency shelter. The support needs of people experiencing homelessness vary widely although the proportion of people with complex mental health and/or substance use issues is increasing. As such, there is a need to be adaptable with homelessness services, including program composition and model, to provide the appropriate supports and services to address needs.

Permanent affordable and supportive housing is the solution to homelessness. At the same time, there is a need to support people experiencing homelessness. Investments in both housing and shelter projects are critical to helping people who are in immediate

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need for shelter, while also creating sustainable and long-term solutions for people experiencing homelessness.

Program Selection and System Gaps

Data Informed Homelessness System Programming and Service Decisions

The City's Street Needs Assessment (SNA) is a city-wide, point-in-time count and survey of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto. The City has been conducting the SNA since 2006 and has done so again in 2009, 2013, 2018 and 2021. The main objectives of the SNA are to determine the scope and profile/demographics of people experiencing homelessness and their needs around accessing housing. The SNA includes people experiencing homelessness staying outdoors and in encampments, City-administered shelters, 24-hour respite sites, 24-hour women's drop-ins, temporary hotel programs, and in provincially administered Violence Against Women shelters, health, treatment facilities, and correctional facilities.

Results from the SNA have demonstrated that specific groups are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, pointing to the need for appropriate services to support them.

Indigenous people continue to be overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, especially people staying outdoors and in encampments. All five Street Needs Assessments have shown the overrepresentation of Indigenous people – in 2021, making up about 15% of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto and an even greater proportion of people experiencing outdoor homelessness (23%).

The results from both the 2018 and 2021 SNAs show a significant overrepresentation of Black individuals among people experiencing homelessness relative to their share of the total population of Toronto. Almost one-third of people experiencing homelessness in the 2021 survey identified as Black, despite comprising only 9% of Toronto's population. This trend is consistent with the 2018 SNA where 41% of people experiencing homelessness identified as Black.

Youth, in particular 2SLGBTQ+ youth, are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto. In addition, almost one-third of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto first experienced homelessness as children or youth and 18% reported previous experience with the foster care system.

In October 2024, TSSS will conduct its sixth SNA in collaboration with community partners in the homelessness and allied sectors. Toronto is among other communities across Canada participating in a federally mandated, nationally coordinated point-in-time count and survey to create a national picture of homelessness. This next Street Needs Assessment will provide critically important updated data that will be used to inform programming and drive evidence-informed service decisions.

Level of Support and Support Needs in the Shelter Service System

At point of intake into the shelter system, an individual's support needs are assessed through the Service Triage, Assessment, and Referral Support (STARS) Intake and Triage module in the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS). This assessment of identified level of need helps to inform case management caseload planning and service planning for individuals residing in shelters.

Data from May 2024 reveal that 38.2% of individuals with a level of support assessed have an assessment of low support need, 50.8% of individuals have an assessment of moderate support needs, and 11.1% of individuals have an assessment of high support needs. Assessed level of support varies among sub-populations within the shelter sector, with seniors and Indigenous individuals having higher proportions of high support needs (19% and 24% respectively) when compared to the general shelter population. The HSCIS will work to cater to the unique needs of the people seeking shelter services with some programs offering more independence and others with more fulsome wrap-around social and health supports.

Return to Shelter Rates

In contrast with other municipalities of similar size across North America, Toronto has a relatively low rate of return to shelter from permanent housing at 8.3% over a two-year period. Among this rate of return, families have a very low return rate (3.4%) compared with single adults (17.8%). Youth have the highest rate of return at 21.3%.

Follow up case management supports are essential for people with moderate or complex needs once they have been housed. These services are provided through a number of programs to help facilitate lower rates of returns to the shelter system from permanent housing. Individuals transitioning from homelessness into private market or social housing units may be supported by individualized follow up case management supports provided through the Housing Focused Client Support Portfolio. These case management supports are provided for at least 12 months post-housing and help tenants to stabilize in community. In addition, individuals who move into permanent supportive housing are supported by building-specific, on-site 24/7 support services provided via non-profit housing and service providers. Individuals may also be supported by longer-term community-based supports funded through the province. These supports are often higher intensity health and mental health specific supports.

Shelter Service Model

In 2017, City Council approved the New Shelter Service Model (now the Shelter Service Model). Initially piloted in eight shelter sites, the Shelter Service Model has since been implemented across 12 shelter sites. The model is comprised of both design and infrastructure guidelines to ensure thoughtfully designed shelter buildings, as well as a flexible service model component that is adaptable to site-specific service and support needs. The Shelter Service Model is an evidence-based, best-practice approach to providing shelter services that facilitates individualized supports and service planning for shelter residents. Key components of the service delivery model include:

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- Enhanced Case Management Service Model: Shelter sites funded to deliver the Shelter Service Model use a 1:20 case management staffing to client ratio. The 1:20 ratio best supports individuals residing in shelter sites to participate in creating individualized support plans including financial and housing plans, as well as referrals to relevant support services such as primary health care and mental health and addictions supports, as applicable. This case management support helps individuals to find housing and supports that best meet their needs, goals, and preferences.

- Peer Shelter Support Program: Sites operating the Shelter Service Model have access to a peer shelter support program operated through a funded community partner, Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC). Peer shelter workers are individuals with lived experience of homelessness who are employed to provide support to individuals residing in shelters including empowerment and recovery-oriented approaches to supporting clients. In addition, peer shelter workers provide training, education, and consultation to shelter staff. This program is an important mechanism for meaningful engagement with service users, as well as provides paid opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness throughout the shelter system.

- Additional components of the Shelter Service Model include the development of standardized assessment tools for best-fit support services and creating intentional connections to health services.

Standardized Assessment Tools for Best-Fit Support Services

Participation in the City's Coordinated Access to housing system supports all shelter sites in ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness are best matched to the right type of support and housing opportunity. The comprehensive STARS (Service Triage, Assessment, and Referral Support) Supports Assessment is a component of the City's common assessment tool that ensures a robust, timely and accurate assessment of client support need is identified to ensure stable housing and support opportunities are secured. Using this assessment tool, staff are best able to match individuals experiencing homelessness into specialized supportive housing opportunities that include site-specific connections to primary care supports that best meet their needs, goals, and preferences.

Intentional Connections to Health Services

TSSS' collaborative work on a Homelessness Health Services Framework outlines a strategic approach to the provision of health services across homelessness service settings, in partnership with health and community partners. The aim is to ensure people experiencing homelessness have consistent, equitable and timely connections to health services, including primary care, harm reduction and mental health case management, regardless of where they are sheltered. Critical to this work is the improved relationships between the homelessness services system and health partners, including Ontario Health, which build on the partnerships formed during the pandemic. The Framework model supports access to health services and seamless transition of

supports throughout a client's journey within Toronto, including transition to permanent housing.

Community Engagement to Support New Shelters

TSSS begins planning for community engagement as soon as a property is considered for purchase as a shelter site. Prior to securing a shelter location, City staff brief local City Councillors about proposed shelter locations. City staff work with local Councillors throughout the development of the new shelter to share project details and foster solution-focused engagement with the community. The site operators, in collaboration with the City and the Councillor's office, foster strong relationships with residents, community members and local businesses and organizations at their location.

Additional engagement support is provided through Community Engagement Facilitators. Community Engagement Facilitators are third-party consultants who serve as the point-of-contact for inquiries, questions and concerns related to a new shelter location. Drawing on their demonstrated expertise in managing complex and potentially contentious community engagement processes, Community Engagement Facilitators devise a tailored plan to engage each community effectively, ensuring continuous communication among the City, service providers, and community members. Methods to engage with community members includes individual meetings, focus-groups, email responses, phone calls, bulletin updates, information sessions, open houses, community walks, and/or site visits.

Prior to a new shelter service opening, a Community Liaison Committee (CLC) may also be formed, dependent on the interest of local stakeholders and the local City Councillor. The CLC meets semi-regularly to address questions, share information, and collectively problem-solve community concerns related to the new shelter.

Neighbourhood Integration and Site-Specific Programming

After the new shelter site opens, the Community Engagement Facilitator and TSSS transfer ongoing community engagement to the site operator. Through a community engagement and client program coordinator staffing position, the site operator will continue to respond, engage, and implement initiatives that support the ongoing integration and success of the shelter in the neighbourhood. This may include identifying ways community members can improve their understanding of shelter programs and services to support, volunteer, or donate to the shelter, or can include hosting events and programs that bring community members and shelter clients together.

The Shelter Service Model also provides the framework for supporting shelter sites to connect with local support services to ensure shelter-specific populations are best supported to meet their unique needs. The community engagement and client program coordinator staffing position will support the shelter by developing localized referral-based support opportunities and complimentary community programming for shelter clients. On-site supports vary according to location and can be tailored to best meet client needs.

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Where possible, shelters will include community and programming spaces. These spaces will cater to both shelter users and local residents in a way that provides for safety and confidentiality, can help integrate new shelters into existing communities. Dedicated spaces for programming and support services can significantly improve the experience of shelter users during their stay in shelter. This includes shared-use areas, dedicated spaces for multi-faith activities and community-led gatherings, access to quiet program spaces, spaces to facilitate self-driven activities, and ensuring shelters have adequate space for mental health supports.

Shelter Design and Technical Guidelines

First launched in 2021, the Shelter Design and Technical Guidelines (SDTG) (https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/8e2c-SDTG-2023-Release-FinalJuly-11AODA.pdf) provide best practices for shelter building development, design, and major site renovations. The SDTG is intended to respond to the evolving needs of people experiencing homelessness, and enhance positive outcomes for shelter users, staff, visitors, and the surrounding community. Recommendations in the STDG includes design principles, functional components of buildings, environmental design, and materials and finishes. Seven key principles were developed to guide the SDTG. This includes infrastructure that fosters respect and dignity, is created with user-centred design, and prioritizes health, wellness, safety, and security.

The SDTG underwent review in 2021 and 2022, with an updated version released in July 2023. The update includes recommendations developed through a collaborative engagement process with shelter staff, building architects, operators across the sector, and people experiencing homelessness. The 2023 SDTG has added guidelines related to accessible design, wayfinding, signage, managing pets in shelters, IPAC, pest control, durability considerations, and Toronto Green Standards (TGS).

The current process led by TSSS, Corporate Real Estate Management and CreateTO to identify, evaluate and secure potential shelter locations also takes into consideration the built form requirements needed to ensure new HSCIS sites will follow the updated SDTG. This includes shelters with a capacity of approximately 80 spaces, adequate space for meeting with clients and site programming, accessible design, outdoor spaces, and built form that supports flexibility to adapt to evolving program needs.

New shelters will take a design approach that considers the individuality of those using the shelter system. The 2023 update of the guidelines, which includes an enhanced intersectional lens informed by consultation with equity deserving populations, considers how different factors shape experiences of people in shelters, and how built form can improve these experiences.

Recent Successes: Shelters that Adhere to SDTG

Several shelters have opened that have incorporated STDG principles and garnered positive feedback from shelter users, staff, and community members. Feedback shared through the 2022 SDTG review and consultation process highlighted notable

improvements in client and staff experiences at shelters that have incorporated STDG principles. This includes the positive impact of dedicated program and meeting spaces, accessible design, pet-friendly buildings, larger rooms that provide more privacy, and appropriate outdoor areas. Additionally, improved built form and design, as well as enhanced site programming and on-site supports have supported the integration of these shelters into the broader community. Shelters that have incorporated STDG principles include 3306 Kingston Rd., 4117 Lawrence Ave. E., 101 Placer Court, 731 Runnymede Rd. and 2671 Islington Ave.

Operator Selection Process

TSSS is currently developing processes to provide non-profit organizations across the city with the opportunity to apply to operate HSCIS shelter sites. The process design will ensure transparency and accountability, while ensuring selected candidates are enabled to meet the intended objectives of the proposed shelter program. Successful operators will be chosen as soon as possible so they can have input into the facility design to enhance safety, dignity, and meet the needs of Toronto's diverse homeless population.

The Toronto Shelter Network (TSN), the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) and Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) are key partners for TSSS and the City. City staff are working with both TSN and TAEH to collaborate with the homelessness sector to identify sector priorities and system gaps and explore capacity building opportunities to support interested agencies to engage operator selection processes. Through collaboration with the TICAB, TSSS is co-developing a distinct process to implement the funding allocation for Indigenous shelters. The City is also prioritizing the development of a Black-led shelter as part of the first phase of HSCIS shelter development. This includes engagement with Black-led agencies and community members to identify priorities for Black-led shelter spaces.

The operator selection processes will be carefully crafted to respond to pressing needs across the homelessness sector, as identified through shelter system data and continuous engagement and consultation across the sector. This can include programs that facilitate transition from shelter into housing opportunities.

Long-Term Use

As committed to City Council in EC9.4, City staff will secure a minimum of five (5) HSCIS shelter sites in 2024. Sites purchased and owned by the City can be repurposed for alternative uses in the future, including the conversion to housing. As previously reported, creating purpose-built shelter sites is significantly cheaper than leasing hotels, which over a ten-year period translates to a cost-savings of $37 million per site. In addition to that cost difference, purpose-built shelters can be developed to be more accessible, safer, and more responsive to the diverse needs of shelter clients, staff, and the surrounding community, and can more easily be converted to housing if demand for shelter has stabilized.

Next Steps

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Subject to City Council's approval of the recommendations included in the "Advancing the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) and the 2025 Shelter Infrastructure Plan", City staff will engage in a collaborative process across the homelessness sector and conduct a review of current gaps in the system to identify HSCIS priorities. This process will support site design and operator selection for new HSCIS shelter sites.

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