

Options to Fund and Expand the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program

Date: February 10, 2025

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: General Manager Toronto Water, General Manager Parks & Recreation, and General Manager Toronto Shelter & Support Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to City Council's direction to explore options for expanding the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program (the Program) and the City's network of water bottle filling stations to both align with the City of Toronto's Heat Relief Strategy by improving access to drinking water for vulnerable populations during heat warnings and ensure an equitable distribution of Program resources at events across all Community Council Areas (CCAs).

Toronto Water is expanding the criteria for the Program to ensure a more balanced distribution of water trailers at events across the City's CCAs. Additionally, Toronto Water will collaborate with Toronto Shelter and Support Services Division to support the City's Heat Relief Strategy.

Toronto Water recommends that the Program's expansion be realized by contracted services on an as-needed basis. This approach makes efficient use of existing City resources by enabling Toronto Water to respond to emergencies as required, while continuing to attend scheduled events.

Parks & Recreation is upgrading old water fountains with new water bottle filling features as part of the Back on Track initiatives and will continue to expand the water bottle filling network on Parks and Recreation spaces, where opportunities allow.

The expansion of the Program does not require participation/program delivery from Solid Waste Management Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Toronto Water, General Manager Parks & Recreation, and General Manager Toronto Shelter & Support Services recommend that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Toronto Water and General Manager, Toronto Shelter & Support Services to establish and formalize roles, responsibilities, and deployment procedures for the HTO To Go Water Trailer program as part of the City's Heat Relief Strategy response protocol, with an implementation target of end of the first quarter of 2025.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Toronto Water to establish and administer a contract with a third-party water trailer service provider to supply water trailer services for deployment at City sites, as selected by Toronto Shelter and Support Services, that meet the operational and logistical requirements for water trailer deployment as part of the City's Heat Relief Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommended option anticipates the addition of the use of a third-party service contract for water trailer services.

Annual contracted services costs are estimated at \$25,000. This estimate is based on the cost of renting one water trailer for 14 days of service per year. A one-time cost of \$5,000 is required for the purchase of supplies to connects rental trailers to the hydrants.

Costs associated with the implementation of the recommended option are included in the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget for Toronto Water. Any additional funding required to support the expanded HTO To Go Water Trailer Program in the future will be considered through future year Budget processes.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 3, 2024, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee considered and carried Councillor James Pasternak's motion to adopt item 2024IE15.8 <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE15.8>

At its meeting of July 24-25, 2024, City Council adopted item 2024IE15.8 with two amendments directing the General Manager, Toronto Water, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, and

the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services to explore options to fund and expand the HTO To Go Water Trailer program.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE15.8>

At its meeting of November 26, 2019, City Council adopted recommendations for the City to continue to strengthen its response to hot weather. As mitigating the impacts of heat is a key aspect of the City's efforts to build resilience to climate change, incorporating the Heat Relief Strategy into planning for resilience is recommended as an effective long-term approach.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-138865.pdf>

At its meeting of May 4, 2017, the Parks and Environment Committee requested a report back to the Parks and Environment Committee on the status of implementing the Bottled Water Policy in Toronto parks and park facilities, and its progress installing water bottle filling stations, as well as providing any recommendations for improving access to Toronto tap water at special events in City parks and park facilities.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PE19.5>

COMMENTS

1. BACKGROUND

Water Bottle Policy in City Parks and Facilities

Parks and Recreation have installed 244 drinking water stations in parks and facilities across the city. As part of the Back on Track initiative, 100 aging water fountains will be replaced and upgraded to include water bottle filling capacity, with installation targeted for 2025. Further, as part of its long-term strategy to improve drinking water access, the network of water bottle filling stations will continue to be replaced or installed as needed and as budget allows.

HTO To Go Water Trailer Program

Delivered by Toronto Water, the primary mandate of the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program is to support emergency responses, whether operational or public health-related. When not required for emergencies, City-owned water trailers are available for scheduling at public events that meet the program's established criteria.

Program resources include two (2) water trailers and outreach equipment, such as tents, podiums, and tables. Staffing consists of two (2) permanent Event Coordinators and up to nine (9) part-time seasonal Chief Booth Attendants, available from May to September.

Current HTO To Go Water Trailer Mobilization Criteria

The HTO To Go Water Trailer program currently operates using priority mobilization protocol, which determines the deployment of water trailers based on the specific conditions outlined below:

Table 1: Current Water Trailer Mobilization Priority

Priority	Mobilization	Conditions
1	Emergencies - Declared Operational Outage (sustained large-scale water service disruption) OR Declared Heat Emergencies	As directed by Toronto Water Senior Management.
2	Community Outreach Event Requests	Event meets program criteria. Trailer is not already scheduled elsewhere.

Emergency Mobilization Statistics

The City's HTO To Go water trailers are prioritized for deployment during emergencies where a clean, safe drinking water supply is required. Positioned at a central, accessible location, the water trailer provides a temporary drinking water supply until emergency conditions are resolved or regular water service is restored. For example, a water trailer will be mobilized in response to a water distribution system outage, such as a watermain break that disrupts service to a number of households and businesses for an extended period. A summary of emergency response activities in 2023 and 2024 is provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: 2023 and 2024 Emergency Response Days and Hours

Year	Date	Response Hours	Response
2023	17-Jun-23	5	Multi-residential Water Outage Response 6, 8, 10 & 12 Crescent Town Road
2024	17-Jun-24	0.5	Heat Emergency Response Sankofa Square and Moss Park
	18-Jun-24	23.5	
	19-Jun-24	19.5	
	20-Jun-24	9	
	21-Jun-24	13.5	

Community Outreach Mobilization Statistics

The water trailers are most often used as community outreach tools at publicly accessible, non-ticketed outdoor events. At these events, the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program staff engage with event participants and distribute information about the City's drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater services.

Program performance is measured by audience reach (event attendance) and the volume of Toronto Water service and program literature distributed, both in hardcopy and digital format. Program performance measures do not currently measure the equitable distribution of program resources at events across the City's CCAs.

Table 3: Toronto Water Community Outreach Program Performance Indicators

Year	Events (#)	Attendees (#)	Literature Distribution (pcs)	Literature Consumption (Pcs/Event)
2018	207	3.6 M	7791	38
2019	264	4.3 M	13079	50
2022*	150	1.9 M	6385	43
2023	238	6.1 M	11135	47

*Program suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic

Allocation of HTO To Go Water Trailers at Events Across Community Council Areas

The HTO To Go Water Trailer Program received 360 event requests for the 2023 season, of which 183 were confirmed and 177 were denied. Toronto Water may deny applications for the use of HTO To Go water trailers if the event does not meet the City's eligibility criteria which include: a non-ticketed, publicly accessible event, having an estimated attendance of at least 500 people, and occurring within the trailer's operating season (May 1 to September 30). Events must also provide a location with suitable access to a water supply for trailer hookup. Failure to meet these logistical needs could also lead to a rejection of the application. Priority is given to Toronto Water-sponsored events, and any event that does not align with the City's Non-Discrimination Policy or Ontario Human Rights Code will be automatically denied.

Currently application eligibility criteria do not consider an equitable or balanced distribution of the water trailers across CCAs. The following provides a breakdown of approved request by CCA in 2023 and details regarding community outreach exposure (the number of event attendees). Table 4 shows that 70% of all events attended were in Toronto and East York.

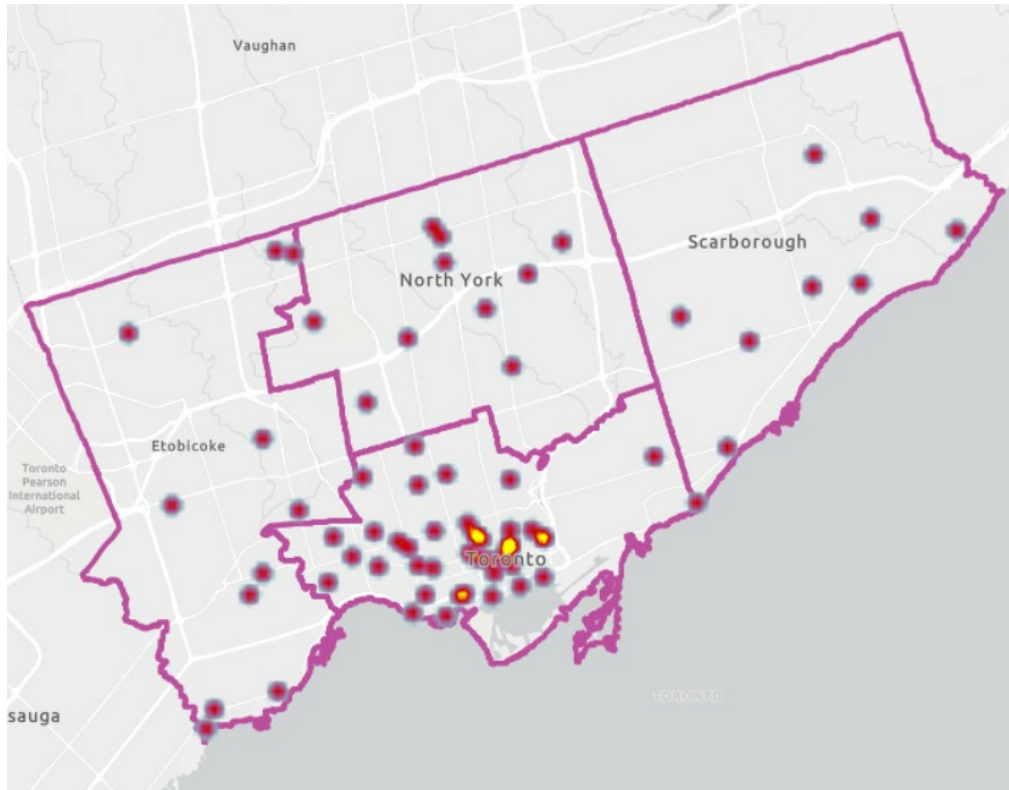
Figure 1: Photo of the HTO To Go Trailer in Use



Table 4: 2023 Confirmed Event Requests

CCA	Confirmed Requests	% Total Confirmed Requests	Exposure
Etobicoke York	16	9%	444,800
North York	25	14%	355,300
Toronto and East York	129	70%	671,500
Scarborough	13	7%	283,650
Total	183	100%	1,755,250

Figure 2: Distribution of 2023 Confirmed Events across the CCAs



City of Toronto Heat Relief Strategy

The Heat Relief Strategy is the City of Toronto's protocol for responding to extreme heat events. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) issues Heat Warnings when any of the following conditions are forecasted for two or more consecutive days:

- Maximum temperatures of 31°C or higher,
- Overnight temperatures of 20°C or higher, or
- A humidex value of 40°C or higher.

From May 15 to September 30, members of the Hot Weather Response Coordinating Committee monitor ECCC notifications. When a Heat Warning is declared, typically the afternoon before the event (or in the morning during sudden weather changes), members implement the necessary responses.

Heat Relief services include:

- Access to over four hundred Cool Spaces citywide, including shelters and 24-hour respite centres for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- City-coordinated measures to ensure cool spaces are available in multi-unit residences.
- Support for people experiencing homelessness through the City's contracted Street Outreach service provider.
- Extended hours at public pools, with closing times at 11:45 p.m.

Although Toronto Water has accommodated requests to provide drinking water access during Heat Warnings, formalized procedures are not yet in place to guide decision-making on water trailer deployment as part of the City's Heat Relief Strategy.

2. HTO TO GO PROGRAM EXPANSION ACTIONS

Toronto Water commits to expanding the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program and will update its processes, decision-making criteria, public communications, application forms, and performance metrics to support this change. Through collaboration with Toronto Shelter & Support Services the Program will support the City's Heat Relief Strategy and with updated processes work to ensure equitable distribution of program resources at events across the City's CCAs.

Alignment with City's Heat Relief Strategy

To align the HTO TO Go Water Trailer Program with the City's Heat Relief Strategy, Toronto Water will incorporate mobilization requests from Toronto Shelter and Support Services into the Program's prioritization criteria. This adjustment will ensure that the deployment of water trailers is responsive to identified needs and aligns with the City's Heat Relief Strategy.

Table 5: Heat Relief Strategy Alignment Water Trailer Mobilization Priority

Priority	Mobilization	Conditions
1	Emergencies - Declared Operational Outage (sustained large-scale water service disruption) OR Declared Heat Emergencies	Deployment as directed by Toronto Water Senior Management OR as directed by Toronto Shelter and Support Services in alignment with the City's Heat Relief Strategy
2	Community Outreach Event Requests	Event meets program event criteria, including new criteria for equitable distribution of water trailers at events across the City's CCAs. Trailer is not already scheduled elsewhere.

As part of the City's Heat Relief Strategy response, Toronto Shelter and Support Services would initiate the deployment of a water trailer. Toronto Water and Toronto Shelter and Support Services will find a suitable location for the water trailer that provides adequate access while meeting the logistic requirements of the water trailer.

Toronto Water would be responsible for providing water trailer service and would provide onsite operational support as required. Toronto Shelter and Support Services would provide onsite service, oversight and support to community members.

A formal agreement and process outlining roles and responsibilities will be required by end of the first quarter of 2025.

Equitable Distribution of trailers at Events across all Community Council Areas

Modifications to the HTO To Go event selection criteria are necessary to ensure a more equitable distribution of program resources across all CCAs. This shift will better balance access to the Program across all regions of the city.

Distribution of events requested and events attended across CCAs will be monitored periodically throughout the event season. Program staff will select events based on the CCA with the least number of events selected to date in the program season when considering multiple requests for the trailer on the same day. Program staff will evaluate CCA distribution annually and implement measures to improve CCA distribution equity where necessary.

Had equitable allocation measures been applied to the 2023 events, detailed in Table 4, it is estimated that approximately 40% fewer events would have been approved in the Toronto and East York area, while program attendance at events in other regions would have increased: by 10% in Etobicoke York, 14% in North York, and 18% in Scarborough.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED TO EXPAND THE HTO To Go WATER TRAILER PROGRAM

Toronto Water has evaluated three options to support the expanded scope of the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program, focusing on equitable distribution across Community Council Areas (CCAs) and alignment with the City's Heat Relief Strategy. Each option assumes that the necessary processes to support the Program's expansion are already in place.

Option 3, which utilizes third-party water trailer services, is the preferred approach for supporting the expansion of the HTO To Go Program. By contracting external providers for mobile water trailer services, the City can flexibly scale resources to meet demand as required by the City's Heat Relief Strategy. This approach avoids the capital and operating costs associated with additional in-house trailers.

A summary comparison of each option is shown in Table 6

Table 6: HTO To Go Program Expansion Options Trade-off Summary

Option	Cost /Year	Time To Implement	Service Level Change	Risks/Benefit
# 1 Status Quo	\$0	4 weeks	Negative - Reduced capacity for Emergencies and status quo for Community Events	Risk for concurrent emergencies - resource and trailer load versus capacity
# 2 One New Trailer	One-time Capital \$88k Ongoing Operating \$118k	12 – 18 months	Improved - Increased capacity for Emergencies and Community Events	Improved, dedicated increase in capacity – 33%
# 3 Third-Party Trailer On-Demand	One-time Capital \$5k Ongoing Operating \$25K	6 – 8 months	Greatly Improved - Flexibility to deal with many concurrent Emergencies while Toronto Water owned trailer dedicated to Community Events	Greatly improved increase in capacity on demand for emergencies – limited by vendor(s). Risk is difficult to identify cost. Risk to adequate staffing challenging if high load. Risk in vendor reliance.

A detailed overview of the three options is provided below.

Option 1 – Status Quo, Leverage Existing Resources

With this option, only existing program resources are used, and the HTO To Go mobilization protocol would be adjusted to support equitable distribution across CCAs in alignment with Toronto’s Heat Relief Strategy.

Key impacts include a reduced capacity for emergency response during simultaneous emergencies, and reduced availability of water trailers to attend events during emergency conditions resulting in a potential reduction to community engagement numbers.

This option does not require capital or operational expenditures.

Option 2 – Purchase One (1) Additional Trailer

Toronto Water would procure one (1) additional simple, basic ten (10) tap stainless steel water trailer. Under declared emergency conditions, Toronto Water, following instructions from Toronto Shelter and Support Services, would deploy the trailer according to the response protocols defined by the Heat Relief Strategy.

Key impacts of Option 2 include increased capacity to respond to requests for emergency deployment and increased capacity to attend Community Outreach Events. This would improve Toronto Water's ability to equitably manage the allocation of the existing water trailers at events across the city and increase outreach opportunities.

The procurement of an additional water trailer is costly and would require additional investments such as a vehicle for towing, storage space, and staffing resources for deployment, maintenance, and repairs. Ancillary equipment for connecting to a water source and ensuring site safety would also be necessary.

Capital costs are estimated at \$88,000

Annual operating costs are estimated at \$118,000 (including two (2) additional Chief Booth Attendants and one (1) new Full Time L79 Event Coordinator).

Lead times for trailer procurement are estimated at 12 to 18 months.

Figure 3: Stainless Steel 10 Tap Water Trailer



Option 3 – Third-Party Water Trailer Services for Emergency Response (Preferred)

Third-party providers offer mobile water trailers, which could be used as needed during emergencies, allowing the City to focus its existing HTO To Go Water Trailers on events.

Key benefits of Option 3 include the ability to rapidly scale up by renting water trailers for emergency purposes as required. Using third-party services would reduce the risks

and costs associated with purchasing, housing, maintaining, and repairing an additional trailer.

Equipment rental services would require Toronto Water staff to hook up the water trailer, and Toronto Shelter and Support Services staff to provide on-site oversight and support community members. Contracts with third-party vendors would need to guarantee trailer availability from April through September to align with the City's Heat Relief Strategy.

To mitigate the risk of a third-party supplier being unable to provide a trailer during an emergency, Toronto Water recommends creating a roster of multiple potential vendors. Should no vendors be available, the City's HTO to Go trailers would be deployed to meet emergency needs. Toronto Water will collaborate with Toronto Shelter and Support Services to establish protocols, ensuring the City's needs are effectively managed.

One-time costs for rental trailer hook-up supplies are estimated at \$5,000
Annual operating costs are estimated at \$25,000.

It is expected that Toronto Water could establish a roster for the end of the second quarter of 2025.

4. FUNDING OPTIONS

Funding options identified by Toronto Water provide various pathways for funding the expanded HTO To Go Water Trailer Program. Combining grants, sponsorships, and budget allocation options could support the continued operation and growth of the Program.

Grants

Toronto Water has identified the option of seeking grants for equipment procurement under environmental sustainability or climate change adaptation programs. One potential source is the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund, which could cover approximately 30% of capital costs. This option aligns the Program's goals with broader environmental and climate initiatives, making it a viable path for obtaining funding for new trailers or other necessary equipment.

Sponsorships and Partnerships

Another option is to pursue sponsorship and external partnership opportunities through the City's Office of Partnerships to secure funding for both capital and operating costs. Sponsorships could be sourced from private sector organizations or community partners that support public health and sustainability initiatives. A target sponsorship amount of \$110,000 per trailer has been identified, which could help offset significant costs while engaging the community and corporate partners.

Capital and Operating Budget Allocations

The estimated program resources needed to support the expansion of the HTO To Go Program are included in the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget.

Future funding beyond these program resources will need to be identified and prioritized through the annual budget process. This requires coordinated efforts across relevant Divisions to position the City to proactively plan for and implement any expanded scope of the HTO To Go Water Trailer Program.

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