

# 45 The Esplanade

## Program Overview & Frequently Asked Questions

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### Program Overview

As part of the City of Toronto's three-tier response to [COVID-19](#) to support individuals who are experiencing homelessness, the City has been opening new temporary spaces in a number of hotels to allow for physical distancing. In the past year, more than 25 additional sites have been opened across the city moving more than 3,600 people into a combination of hotels, temporary respites, and interim and permanent housing. As a result of physical distancing requirements in existing shelters, these temporary new spaces are intended to help maintain the existing shelter capacity, not increase it.

45 The Esplanade is in Spadina-Fort York Ward 10 (across the street from Toronto Centre – Ward 13), will be a temporary emergency shelter hotel location for the City of Toronto.

Starting February 22, 45 The Esplanade will begin to accept singles and couples of all genders who are experiencing homelessness. The process of accepting residents will be gradual and phased in at a manageable rate. The City is leasing 205 rooms and will have the ability to rent up to 254 rooms if the need arises. A small number of rooms will be used for staff office space and programming. The City is leasing this site from mid-February until December 31, 2021. Possible extensions may be required due to the ever-changing nature of COVID-19. The service currently operated by St. Felix at 98 The Esplanade will close in Spring 2021. Clients will be referred to other services appropriate to meet their needs, including to the program at 45 The Esplanade.

City Council has delegated authority to open new shelters to staff. The typical process to engage with the community and to support successful integration of the shelter begins 6-9 months before a site opens. Due to this unprecedented pandemic emergency, however, the City has had to act quickly to open emergency sites and provide additional physical distancing within the shelter system under condensed schedules.

The City has contracted the management and provision of services at 45 The Esplanade to [Homes First](#). Homes First has been providing supportive housing and shelter services to Toronto residents for over 35 years, with a focus on the chronically homeless, people with complex mental health and addictions issues, and seniors. Homes First currently operates five shelters, two temporary hotel programs, a winter respite, two warming Centres and 14 housing sites, providing a home and support to more than 1,400 seniors, families, and single adults throughout Toronto.

45 The Esplanade will provide numerous wrap-around support for all clients, including:

- A minimum of 12 Homes First staff will be available on-site to support clients 24/7 in addition to supervisors on each shift
- Special supervisors in Health Navigation and Living Standards will be a part of the program
- Intensive Case Management Worker and a Housing Help Workers will be assigned to all residents to help them develop a permanent housing plan and a plan to obtain personal documents, a local primary care physician, employment, etc.
- All meals will be provided onsite
- Recreational and social engagement programming will be offered onsite

- The [Inner City Health Associates](#) and [Multi-Discipline Outreach Teams](#) will provide a number of mental and physical health related supports including nursing, an on-site medical clinic with a primary care physician and psychiatric support
- All recommended and required Toronto Public Health Controls for containing COVID-19 will be implemented
- On-site services are not available on a drop-in basis, they are for program residents only

A number of community safety initiatives and measures will be put in place for this site including:

- A security team of 4 to 6 guards will provide onsite support inside the shelter
- Two Community Safety Teams for 24/7 patrols in the area around the property from Yonge St. to Parliament St., and from Lakeshore Blvd. E to Richmond St. All team members are trained to respond to immediate non-police or non-EMS related matters. Teams will also be patrolling “hotspots” identified by the community.
- Residents will also be encouraged to assist with community clean-ups and picking up needles and drug paraphernalia
- Security surveillance cameras are being installed onsite and will be monitored

The City is planning an information session with the community on February 18, 2021 from 7 to 9pm. Residents and interested people are invited to attend. More information and to connect: [Community Information Meeting](#)

Key Contacts:

- Community Engagement, Joe Mihevc, at [clc.45theesplanade@gmail.com](mailto:clc.45theesplanade@gmail.com). Send an email request to be added to the community contact list to receive electronic community bulletins and updates.
- Immediate site concerns: Homes First (24/7): 647-454-8824
- General Inquiries: [ssha.homeless@toronto.ca](mailto:ssha.homeless@toronto.ca)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Overview

### 1. Who will 45 The Esplanade temporary shelter serve?

45 The Esplanade will provide services to singles and couples of all genders, including programs that support case management, housing help, meals, harm reduction and recreational programming. It will be run by [Homes First](#), a highly reputable social service organization that has been providing supportive housing and shelter services in Toronto for over 35 years.

### 2. What gives the City authority to open new shelters?

As authorized by Council and City by-laws, City staff have the [Delegated Authority](#) to site new shelters in locations that meet zoning by-laws prior to engaging with the community. The engagement process for new shelter sites starts after a location has been secured, typically about 6-9 months before it opens, with the focus of that engagement on the positive integration of the shelter into the community, through the sharing of information and the formation of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC).

More information:

[Updated Engagement Process](#)  
[General Information on Shelters](#)

### 3. How has COVID-19 impacted shelters?

Due to the state of emergency as a result of COVID-19, and with guidance from Ministry of Health and Toronto Public Health to create physical distancing in the shelter system, City staff have had to move rapidly to open over 25 new temporary shelter locations to support physical distancing, avert potential outbreaks in shelters and to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in shelters and the community more broadly.

As a result of physical distancing measures, the number of shelter beds in downtown Toronto has actually decreased by 829 beds from 3853 to 3024. Within that, Ward 10 has seen the number of shelter beds decrease by 88 beds (from 1162 to 1076). Ward 13 has decreased by 333 beds (from 1754 to 1421).

Given the risks associated with COVID-19 and the health guidelines for physical distancing, the City and numerous community agencies have had to work quickly to protect people experiencing homelessness. Since mid-March 2020, new shelter programs across 13 Wards have opened across the City, all without prior community engagement. It is worthy of note that this City strategy for containing the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter system and in the wider community spread has to date been remarkably successful.

The City continues to look for and secure sites that meet the required two metre physical distancing in the shelter system and that also provide space for people who are currently staying in encampments.

### 4. How are new shelter locations selected?

Shelters and supportive housing programs are two of many municipal services that the City provides. Like daycares, libraries, and community centres, it is important that shelters are available in neighbourhoods across the city. When seeking sites to support the emergency need

for physical distancing in the shelter system, City staff seek buildings that are available, affordable, of a suitable size, accessible, and close to transit and services.

In 2016, City Council requested a third-party review of best practices to improve community engagement related to emergency shelter development. The review identified that new sites do not require Council approval in order to be sited, and that they can be developed as a permitted use without community consultation ([Siting New Shelters](#)). The review recommended that the City's engagement and planning process for emergency shelters be refocused away from the question of **where** the shelters are located, and towards the question to **how** communities can support and improve the success of the new service. City Council approved this updated engagement process for new shelter locations in 2017 and gave staff delegated authority to site new shelter locations, without needing Council approval for each new site, to address the urgent need for shelter spaces in the City of Toronto.

The City remains committed to ongoing engagement with communities to mitigate any issues that arise and to ensure the programs successfully integrate into the community.

5. There are already shelters in the area/ward. Why is another service for people experiencing homelessness being opened in our community?

Toronto has the largest shelter system in Canada. To physically distance shelter clients properly as a result of COVID-19, the City needed to increase the number of facilities. The City engaged in an exhaustive search with property managers, developers and landlords to secure safe spaces close to transit and services such as community centres, buildings slated for demolition, hotels and other unique spaces to meet physical distancing guidelines. These buildings are a small part of the overall shelter system serving more than 6,000 people city-wide.

6. Where does funding for shelters come from?

The City of Toronto pays for the costs associated with delivering our COVID-19 response for people experiencing homelessness, including activating new temporary response sites such as 45 The Esplanade. While the City has received funding from the federal and provincial governments, the costs exceed funding provided and additional City funding has been required. The City is working with provincial and federal governments to request additional funding required to address the scale of the response in Toronto and to meet the needs of organizations in Toronto to respond.

7. Does the City have a plan for how long they will need physical distancing shelters?

The City will continue to follow the guidance of the City's Medical Officer of Health and Provincial guidelines related to operations for COVID-19 and physical distancing. The City will be leasing 45 The Esplanade as a temporary emergency shelter from the property owner from mid-February to December 31, 2021. Extensions of the lease will be a function of controlling the spread of COVID-19.

## COVID-19 & Shelter Operations

8. What precautions are being taken to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter and the community?

Since the onset of COVID-19, Toronto Public Health has worked closely with staff in City's Shelter Support Housing and Administration (SSHA) division to prevent spread among people experiencing homelessness. SSHA has and will continue to implement comprehensive infection prevention and control measures in all shelters including 45 The Esplanade. Information is shared with clients on how to protect themselves and others.

The City has implemented a standard screening process using Ontario Public Health guidelines at all points of entry by phone or in-person for those seeking shelter, as well as active monitoring and screening of current clients.

Anyone identified as requiring a health assessment will be referred to one of the province's COVID-19 assessment centres. Transportation will be provided.

Individuals experiencing homelessness who test positive for COVID-19 will be referred directly to a recovery program located at an alternative location and will stay there until they recover. Transportation to the recovery site will also be provided by the City of Toronto.

Clients will be expected to follow all physical distancing guidelines and by-laws while outside the shelter like any other community member. Disposable masks will be made available to clients if they are unable to acquire their own masks. The shelter will use Toronto Public Health signage and educational materials on physical distancing. Areas within the shelter have floor markings and occupancy limits and each room will be designed and set up for physical distancing.

9. Are shelter users required to take a COVID-19 test prior to moving to a physical distancing shelter?

People are not required to get a COVID-19 test upon admission to a shelter but are screened prior to admission and screened once daily at the site. Mobile testing is happening across the shelter system. 45 The Esplanade will be actively engaged with Toronto Public Health (TPH), and community health partners to conduct universal testing if needed. Homes First will proactively connect with clients to provide support and referrals to housing, COVID-19 education, screening for COVID-19, and testing at a Provincial COVID-19 Assessment Centre.

10. What steps are taken if someone in the shelter (residents or staff) tests positive for COVID-19?

All individuals experiencing homelessness who are under investigation for or confirmed positive for COVID-19 are being cared for by the appropriate healthcare providers in facilities capable of providing safe isolation and observation consistent with public health direction. Clients who are identified as close contacts of a positive case through the TPH investigation of confirmed cases and need 14-day isolation will be referred to an isolation program. Transportation to the site will be provided by the City of Toronto's fleet services.

## Resident Support and Community Safety

11. What are the support services that Homes First will be providing at 45 The Esplanade? Will there be supervised consumption, alcohol or drug counselling?

Clients come to shelter sites with a range of needs, both material and physical. Homes First is currently setting up partnerships with other community agencies and Toronto Public Health that will also provide supports to clients. The wrap around services already confirmed include:

- Staff are always available on-site to support clients 24/7
- Clients will be assigned an Intensive Case Management Worker who will work with them on developing a permanent housing plan
- Clients will also be assessed, and the appropriate referrals made for community services and supports both inside the shelter and with outside organizations
- Three Meals daily will be provided along with recreational and social programming
- [Inner City Health Associates](#) and [Multi-Discipline Outreach Teams](#) will also provide a number of mental and physical health-related supports including nurses, primary physicians, an addictions medicine clinic, and psychiatric assessment and support
- Access to harm reduction services is a public health approach that aims to reduce harms related to substance use. The site will have dedicated full-time harm reduction workers. Safety kits and Naloxone training will be available for clients. Education and information will be a priority, and client referrals can be provided to other relevant partner agencies as needed
- Toronto Public Health is examining the feasibility of establishing enhanced harm reductions services onsite. These services would be available exclusively for residents of the building. Such a program would also decrease drug use in the surrounding streets and neighbourhood.

12. What actions are being taken to support community safety?

Community safety is a priority for the City and Homes First whenever and wherever new services open. There are a number of initiatives and measures that are being put in place for this site.

Two Community Safety Teams (CST) of two people will patrol the area around the property 24/7. The contracted security agency will be One Community Solutions which provides a similar service to other shelters in Toronto. The CSTs can respond to immediate non-police or non-EMS related matters when made aware by the community. The CSTs will also be patrolling locations identified by the community. The “Community Line” telephone number where people can leave messages is 647-688-8475.

Additionally, security guards will be onsite 24/7. Extra security surveillance cameras are being installed and will be monitored. Four to six security guards will be onsite at all times. Finally, the Community Safety Team with their regular patrols, sometimes working with clients of the shelter itself, will pick up any improperly discarded needles or harm reduction supplies they come across.

There is zero tolerance for any violent and/or criminal activity occurring in the shelter or out in the community. As needed, 911 should be called for crimes in progress or the non-emergency police number 416-808-2222 | 416-467-0493 (TTY) to report crimes where no person is in immediate danger (for example, theft, vandalism, fraud).

If a client is found to have acted inappropriately, aggressively, violently, or criminally, they will be accountable for these acts, which may result in their discharge from the shelter.

It is also important also to remember that people using shelter services are equal citizens of the city. They can move around communities and use amenities such as parks, public benches like all residents in our collective city. And like all residents, they are also expected to conduct themselves within the rules/laws and by-laws.

13. Can community members donate food and clothing to the shelter? Is the shelter currently accepting volunteers?

People who are experiencing homelessness need the support of others in the community as they move toward secure housing. At other sites, staff have set up an ongoing community committee to meet regularly and plan different initiatives to support shelter residents. If you are interested in supporting the shelter through donations, fundraising or volunteering, please email: [ryan.evershed@homesfirst.on.ca](mailto:ryan.evershed@homesfirst.on.ca)

14. How will 45 The Esplanade be kept clean?

Along with the typical contracted internal janitorial services, increased exterior cleaning of the hotel and additional garbage pick-up will be established. The roving Community Safety Team, sometimes working with clients of the shelter itself, will pick up any improperly discarded needles or harm reduction supplies they come across them. Additionally, Fresh Start, a not for profit agency contracted by the City will perform needle pickup in the vicinity of 45 The Esplanade three times a week, and they will work with staff onsite to identify hot spots to be addressed.

15. How will smoking be managed?

Smoking is not permitted inside 45 The Esplanade as per provincial law and city bylaws. An outdoor fenced area under the drive through car drop off area is being established for this purpose and for use by residents and staff.

16. What is being done to provide shelter residents with something to do throughout the day/night?

COVID-19 precautions have impacted many recreational activities and programming throughout the shelter system. As restrictions are lifted, various recreational activities and programming will be restored, in the same way we are experiencing in the broader community. The site has Wi-Fi, access to a TV lounge with physical distancing measures. There will be access to large common areas set up for physical distancing to engage with staff, community agencies or each other.

17. How will the City and Homes First ensure people transition out of this shelter? Where would they go after?

All shelters in Toronto work from a Housing First model, with the priority being to assist clients to secure permanent housing, with follow up supports to help with their transition from the shelter. Clients are expected to develop a housing plan with their Housing Help Worker, and then to meet with them regularly to move that plan forward with positive outcomes. Clients secure housing throughout the city.

## Community Engagement

For 45 The Esplanade, the City has established a community engagement team that is eager to connect with community residents and stakeholders. Due to current physical distancing restrictions, internet tools like online meetings, email bulletins, and online posting of information will be used to establish regular communications, keep residents informed and address any concerns that may arise. There are several ways for the community to get engaged, share feedback, and/or ask questions:

- **Community Information Session:** The City will be hosting an online/telephone information session on February 18, 2021 from 7 to 9pm, 2021. For more information including the direct link to connect, please visit: <http://www.toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters>. There will be presentations by City and Homes First staff and a time for questions. All are invited.
- **Community Liaison Committee:** A key highlight to the community engagement process will be the formation of a Community Liaison Committee (CLC). The CLC is made up of representatives of the community (condo boards, residence associations, businesses or local community organizations) that meet to address questions, share information, discuss and collectively problem solve community concerns. This committee will be formed after the Information Session and more information will be shared at that time.

### Questions about the engagement process?

- Get in touch with the Community Engagement Facilitator, Joe Mihevc: [clc.45theesplanade@gmail.com](mailto:clc.45theesplanade@gmail.com)
- General inquiries about homelessness services can be directed to: [ssha.homeless@toronto.ca](mailto:ssha.homeless@toronto.ca)
- For site inquiries and immediate concerns at 45 The Esplanade, please contact: 647-454-8824