

45 The Esplanade Community Bulletin #3

March 30, 2021

Community Bulletin #3 responds to NEW questions and concerns that have been raised over the last month and that have not been addressed on the [web page](#) and in previous bulletins and [FAQ](#).

Location

1. Will there be an option to extend the lease? Could the site become permanent? What types of public health guidance changes would result in a lease extension?

Toronto Public Health (TPH) is working closely with our provincial partners and Shelter Support Housing and Administration (SSHA) to determine the best course of action regarding physical distancing and all shelter operations. As described at the February 18, 2021 public meeting, the City's lease at 45 The Esplanade remains active until December 31, 2021. Updates about any potential extensions to this lease will be shared with the Councillor's office and via the project website, Community Liaison Committee (CLC) and email list.

2. What about using Exhibition Place where there are plenty of rooms and facilities?

The Better Living Centre at Exhibition Place currently accommodates 124 beds through the City's winter services plan to increase capacity of the shelter and 24-hour respite system, with an additional 50 spaces activated in response to cold weather alerts as needed. Exhibition Place has ongoing contractual commitments to various vendors and is unable to commit to availability of the Better Living Centre longer term.

Toronto has the largest shelter system in Canada. SSHA works with Corporate Real Estate Services to source and secure appropriate locations. 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 that allow us to meet physical distancing guidelines. These buildings are a small part of the overall shelter system, which serves more than 6,000 people city-wide. At the time 45 The Esplanade was secured, there were no other feasible property options available.

Community safety

3. In precise terms, how many security and community safety people will be present inside and outside the shelter daily per shift? How frequently will patrols take place? How were these numbers established? Is the Community Safety Team (CST) adequately resourced?

Security is supported both inside, outside and around the Shelter. At the door of and within the building itself, there is a permanent complement of three security guards that oversee the entrance and the internal functioning of the shelter 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Outside the Shelter, there are 2 Community Safety Teams (CSTs) comprised of 2 people also operating 24 hours a day seven days a week. The CSTs are outward facing to the community and are visible via their yellow vests. These teams walk the community between Yonge Street to Parliament Street, and from Lakeshore Boulevard East to Richmond Street. Their overall role is to support community safety more broadly, which includes guiding homeless people into shelters, overseeing community hot spots where safety might be a concern, working with security personnel associated with condo buildings and businesses, and working with police to address

criminal activity. CSTs also pick up drug paraphernalia and are trained in the use of naloxone, a life-saving drug used to reverse the deadly effects of drug overdosing and poisoning.

The level of internal security and public-facing safety teams was determined before the Shelter opened by the City's Corporate Security leadership who undertook a thorough review of the Shelter program, and the community safety issues in the local community, and will be reviewed on a continuous basis by the City's Corporate Security leadership.

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.

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.

4. Will the City pay for additional surveillance and security for affected properties? What will the City do to make my property secure?

The City does not pay for or compensate people for security measures on private property. Vandalism and trespassing are crimes and should be reported to your local police division as the local police division will assign officers / patrols and activities based on information from the community. There is helpful information on the Toronto Police Services website that can help property owners, although labelled apartment building security, the tips could apply to commercial rental properties and condos as well.

- <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/crimeprevention/apartment.php>
- <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/crimeprevention/graffiti.php>
- <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/crimeprevention/personalsafety.pdf>

The City has started developing [SafeTO](#), a Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) Plan that aims to shift from a focus on emergency response to move to a culture of prevention. The plan will prioritize four challenge areas: community trauma, community violence, harm and victimization, and community justice to help bring about a safer Toronto.

5. Will data be collected to evaluate the crime rate in the area/neighbourhood and will the data be made accessible to the public?

The Toronto Police undertake data collection on crime across the city for purposes including allocating police resources. Representatives from 51 and 52 Division are active members of the Community Liaison Committee at 45 The Esplanade and may share information in meetings as appropriate.

6. Will the approach to community safety result in the criminalization of community members who are using supportive services? Are the police properly equipped and trained to deal with the types of issues shelter residents may be facing, including drug use and mental health issues?

All Homes First staff are trained on de-escalation, conflict resolution and crisis prevention, intervention and management. The Community Safety Team at 45 The Esplanade are trained to respond to immediate non-police or non-EMS related matters when made aware by the community, and will also work with police when required. The CST will connect residents with support-

ive resources like the [Streets to Homes](#), [Inner City Health Associates](#) (ICHA) and [Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Health Team](#) (M-DOT) to help minimize BOTH harm to the individual and provide enhanced community safety.

Economic Development

7. What is the City doing to help restauranteurs on The Esplanade who rely heavily on patio business in the spring, summer and autumn?

CafeTO is Toronto program that supports Toronto restaurants during the pandemic period. It has had good success during the summer months of 2020 and the City is looking to repeat and expand the program in 2021. If you are a local restaurateur and want to participate, more information and an application form is available here: [CafeTO](#)

Site operations and services

8. Will there be any standards around large numbers of residents gathering in front of the building?

It is important to remember that Shelter residents have the same legal rights and responsibilities as anyone else when walking and hanging out in the neighbourhood. The Shelter operator will work with residents to maintain physical distancing requirements and follow guidelines.

9. Will there be program requirements for residents to attend skill building classes to find employment?

The goal of the wrap-around services offered at the Shelter is to provide the supports necessary to allow residents to establish their own goals and follow them through. Each resident is connected to a case worker who supports them in pursuing their own goals for their own life journey. Employment support (building a resume, obtaining personal documents, skills training, etc) can be a part of it; for other people the first steps may be addressing their addiction; and for others it might be supportive housing.

10. Where will smoking be located? Could the patio on the second floor be used for smoking and/or as outdoor amenity space?

Smoking will not be permitted inside the Shelter as per provincial legislation and city bylaws. A screened-in smoking area has been established in the front driveway to the Shelter which is experiencing moderate to low usage.

The option of using the second floor patio has been fully explored with the hotel owners and internally at the City. The space is not a part of the lease and has a number of site constraints making it not possible for usage as a smoking location.

11. If someone encounters a person looking for shelter, should we encourage them to go to 45 The Esplanade for intake or is there a better way to support them in finding a room in a shelter?

A person looking for shelter can be referred to the Central Intake & Streets to Homes Assessment & Referral Centre (129 Peter St.). They can be reached through calling 311 or 416-397-5637.

Harm reduction and mental health services

12. What training can the City provide to residents around de-escalation if we happen to encounter someone who is mentally ill or who threatens us directly?

There is no current plan to provide training for businesses or residents around de-escalation or managing a difficult situation. That said, Homes First is currently working on a series of workshops intended for community members interested in developing a deeper understanding of the systemic challenges around homelessness, mental health and harm reduction. Should interest develop, training/educational sessions can be considered through the Community Liaison Committee and the Community Engagement Team: clc.45theesplanade@gmail.com.

13. Will this be a safe consumption site? How does this differ from a harm reduction site?

SSHA has developed a harm reduction framework, which guides policies across the system. 45 Harm reduction supports at 45 The Esplanade are for shelter residents only. Individuals who do not reside at the Shelter and wish to access safe consumption supports will be referred to locations like the one operated by Toronto Public Health at 277 Victoria St.

Both harm reduction sites and supervised consumption sites permit the consumption of drugs on their site under the supervision of trained medical staff. The difference between the two is that a safe consumption site can be accessed by anyone in the wider community.

Toronto is seeing a substantial rise in fatal opioid overdoses and related shelter deaths, increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic. [iPHARE](#), which stands for Integrated Prevention and Harm Reduction initiative, is a multi-pronged effort by the City and community agencies to address opioid-related deaths in Toronto's shelter system. The initiative comes in response to the escalating opioid poisoning crisis in Toronto. As part of iPHARE, the City is working with Toronto Public Health and other community harm reduction programs to introduce a range of harm reduction measures in all shelter locations.

Homelessness and Housing in Toronto

14. Can you speak to the conversion rate/success rate of finding long term housing since using the hotels is only temporary?

For most people, homelessness is a short-term occurrence, resulting from a housing crisis caused by job loss, family breakdown, or other temporary crisis situations. More than half of people who use the shelter system in Toronto stay less than two months and are able to successfully achieve housing stability. However, for some people, homelessness is a more significant challenge resulting from complex health, mental health and other systemic factors. A smaller group of people, 10% of those using shelters, stay for one year or more and require more supports to exit homelessness successfully.

The City's Streets to Homes team and our partner agencies secured permanent housing for 305 people living in outdoors, including in encampments in 2020. In the past 10 years, the City has helped 6,000 individuals who sleeping outside secure permanent housing and 80 percent remain housed after one year.

15. How is the City addressing encampments? How does this shelter relate to the encampments?

Pathway Inside, a new City program, is focused on those living in encampments at four priority sites, namely Moss Park, Alexandra Park, Trinity Bellwoods and Lamport Stadium, that are subject to increased health and safety concerns. The City is prioritizing people living at the four sites who have engaged with staff and assisting them with transition to 45 The Esplanade and other hotel programs by April.

Living outside has a significant, negative impact on overall health and well-being. Just as importantly, encampments are not safe and not legal. There are many varied and complex reasons why someone may live outside. Through ongoing engagement, the City heard that people need programs close to their existing supports, with inside space not just for single occupancy but also for couples. They also need on-site harm reduction.

Pathway Inside addresses these needs and engages daily with people living outside, listening to, and understanding their needs. In addition to providing safe, inside space, the City has worked to establish greater coordination, cooperation and communication among those experiencing homelessness, with their advocates, partner agencies and the surrounding communities.

16. Why is the level of homelessness in the City increasing and what needs to happen to reverse this trend? What is the City's longer-term strategy for addressing homelessness and the lack of affordable housing?

In 2019, City Council adopted the [HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan](#), which provides a comprehensive blueprint to assist more than 341,000 people with a focus on creating permanent housing solutions. This includes 40,000 new affordable rental home approvals of which 18,000 would be supportive housing units.

In September 2020, City Council endorsed the Housing and People Action Plan and the COVID-19 Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy which identifies 12 priority actions for the next 12 months, including actions to invest in housing and supports to decrease the volume and duration of need for emergency shelter.

City Council also request support from other orders of government for the 24-month Housing and Homelessness Recovery Plan to create 3,000 permanent housing opportunities, including \$48 million to provide 2,000 housing opportunity with supports

17. How will the City sustain care and support for the unhoused community of Ward 10 and 13 after this lease is up?

The new temporary facilities like 45 The Esplanade have been set up to meet Ontario Ministry of Health guidelines for physical distancing in congregate living settings, which include the requirement to maintain 2 metres of physical distancing between beds. These locations will continue to be needed until the guidance changes or ends. When physical distancing sites are no longer required, residents may continue to receive services through the City's permanent shelter system.

COVID-19

18. How is COVID-19 being monitored at the shelter and how is the City ensuring that it doesn't spread? Will there be onsite testing?

There are a number of measures being undertaken by Homes First and the City to manage COVID-19 including:

- Shelter residents and staff from Homes First have been identified as a priority group to receive vaccinations. Many have already been vaccinated.

- Each new resident undergoes screening for COVID-19 then takes an onsite test if the initial assessment so warrants, and will be invited to take a vaccine.
- Education of residents on prevention, social distancing, wearing masks is a key priority both inside the shelter and for occasions when residents leave the Shelter.
- If someone is found to have contracted COVID-19, they are taken to another location where proper health care is administered.

Next Steps & Community Engagement

19. How can I help and support the efforts of Homes First to support the needs of individuals struggling with homelessness?

Homes First is excited to become a part of The Esplanade Community and have indicated a desire to hear from the community to connect and develop new volunteer and partnership opportunities.

On the donation side, they are currently looking for donations of warm clothing and winter wear for new residents upon arrival – feel free to include your hangers! Homes First is also putting out a donation request for lightly used mobility devices (canes, walkers, raised toilet seats, etc.) to assist the growing number of senior residents within their program. Local residents have already been generous in their support and for this Homes First is incredibly thankful.

If you are interested in donating or supporting in other ways, please contact: ryan.evershed@homesfirst.on.ca and alexandra.perry@homesfirst.on.ca .

20. Who are the appropriate contacts and how can residents communicate concerns? How does one report an incident?

This [PDF from Homes First describes who to call](#) for various situations. Feel free to print it for handy reference.

- The Esplanade Community Engagement Facilitator and request to be included on the list to receive Community Bulletins: clc.45theesplanade@gmail.com.
- General inquiries about homelessness services: ssha.homeless@toronto.ca
- Site inquiries and immediate concerns at 45 The Esplanade: 647-454-8824