

St. Simon's Clubbe House

Community Information Session Summary

1.0 Overview

On Wednesday March 3, 2021 6:30 to 8:30 pm, the City of Toronto's Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (SSHA) Division hosted an online session to share information and answer questions about the use of 556 Sherbourne Street as a shelter for people experiencing homelessness. The shelter is known as St. Simon's Clubbe House. A closed caption recording and transcript of the meeting will be available on the project website.

As part of the City's response to COVID-19 and the need for physical distancing in the shelter system, 556 Sherbourne Street has been leased by the City of Toronto to act as a temporary emergency shelter. The new shelter, which opened on February 22, 2021, welcomed residents from St Simon's existing shelter at 525 Bloor Street East as part of its relocation plan, and will provide some additional space to support people living outside that are looking to come indoors. The service at 525 Bloor Street East is not able to occupy its current facility beyond May 2021, so a new location is required. There are currently 18 residents at the Bloor Street East shelter who have been relocated to the new location at 556 Sherbourne Street.

The shelter at 556 Sherbourne Street opened in February 2021 and will remain operational until February 2022, with the potential for extension up to an additional year. The service will be operated by St. Simon's Shelter Inc.

This document summarizes responses to questions asked by members of the public prior to and during the community information session. Questions ahead of the meeting were received by the Community Engagement Facilitator via email and phone.

1.1 Notification and Communications

The session was advertised by the City through a flyer which was mailed out to residents and businesses within a 500 metre radius of St. Simon's Clubbe House. The session was also posted on City's project [website](#) and shared through the local Councillor's office via their email list and [webpage](#).

1.2 Virtual Public Meeting

The City's Shelter Support and Housing Division (SSHA) held an online Public Meeting on Wednesday March 3, 2021, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, which was attended by approximately 28 people. The meeting included presentations to share information on the new service location at 556 Sherbourne Street and provided local residents with opportunity to ask questions and share comments.

The session was recorded and will be made available on the shelter [webpage](#) with closed captioning for the public to access, along with a PDF copy of the presentations.

The meeting was led by Community Engagement Facilitator, Jane Farrow and the agenda included the following:

- Welcoming remarks and introductory comments by local Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam
- Welcoming remarks by Suze Morrison, MPP for Toronto Centre
- Presentation by Justin Lewis, Director Infrastructure Planning & Development, Social Services and Housing Administration (SSHA), City of Toronto, on the City of Toronto's shelter services.
- Presentation by Bob Duff, Executive Director of St. Simon's Shelter Inc., about St. Simon's Clubbe House
- Presentation by Jane Farrow on the community engagement process followed by opening the floor to questions and comments
- Q&A Session
- Closing Remarks from Councillor Wong-Tam

The following panelists were available to answer questions from the public following the presentation:

- Bob Duff, Executive Director of St. Simon's Shelter Inc
- Justin Lewis, Director Infrastructure Planning & Development, SSHA, City of Toronto
- Brad Boucher, Manager Operations at Homelessness Initiatives & Prevention Services, SSHA, City of Toronto
- Sgt. Henry Dyck, Toronto Police Services
- Mitchell Lamont, Acting Supervisor Street to Homes, City of Toronto

2.0 Q&A Session Summary

During the session, three questions were asked live and eight questions were asked through the Q&A chat box.

Topics:

1. Safety, security and public health
2. About the site selection and the length of the program there
3. Programs and operations within St. Simon's Clubbe House

2.1 Safety, security and public health

Several people had questions about safety, security and public health considerations related to the facility.

Q: You mentioned that there will be two security people for inside the shelter. Are they going to be patrolling the area outside and if so to what extent?

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: Those two security officers are working inside the building. There will also be two Community Safety Team members working outside the building. They have a certain terrain that they cover surrounding the site and they work from 10am to 10pm.

Q: There is an increasing presence of people experiencing homelessness just west of the area that is going to be monitored by the Community Safety Team. Are those patrols only in the daytime and can that area be extended further west to Church Street?

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: Yes, that team is on duty 10am to 10pm 7 days/week. As far as extending the area of the patrol, we're not committing to anything at this point but this is being brought to SSHA and we're talking about it. Thank you for the question - I think we'll be able to share more information soon. If we can't extend the patrol area we will be sure to explain why.

Q: Children play in the parkette nearby. Do we need to worry about needles and other issues?

Response from Brad Boucher, City of Toronto: If you see a needle, the first recommendation is to contact the Community Safety Team at 647-688-8927. They are responsible for picking up needles and any other drug paraphernalia. You can call them directly or call the shelter and they can send them out.

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: Over the last 7 days CST has retrieved 37 syringes. That's 37 less cases of potential infection. Currently within Clubbe House we have no residents that use injected drugs. We have sharps containers in the resident rooms and also at the intake desk. If you see a syringe, please do contact us. Don't pick it up yourself. There are proper equipment and disposal protocols to follow.

Response from Sgt. Dyck, Toronto Police Services: Casey House started a needle pick-up service because they are providing harm reduction services at their site. If you see a needle on private property, besides the CST team you can also send an email to info@caseyhouse.ca and ask them to get it.

Response from Councillor Wong-Tam: We have the Downtown East Action Plan which is an elevated service delivery for our Ward. We have two new

services that will roll out in April. One is a Community Safety Team made up of outreach workers for needle pickup. The second is a De-escalation Team to respond to calls about people in distress or in crisis. We will introduce these new services once they're all ready and people are trained. The City is responding to the fact that we're in an opioid crisis and we need to mitigate some of the consequences. We want to get all of that paraphernalia off of public and private property. We'll be pushing info out to the community once we introduce these services in April.

Q: What is happening with shelter residents getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Response from Justin Lewis, City of Toronto: The Province has said that people experiencing homelessness are now part of phase 1 for receiving vaccines. Toronto Public Health is working with SSHA and our provincial partners to plan for getting vaccines to the priority groups - that includes front-line workers in congregate settings and people experiencing homelessness. So we're planning for vaccine clinics and Unity Health has already done pilot vaccine sites in three shelters. The vaccines are not mandatory so if people refuse them, City staff are working to educate them about vaccine safety and to encourage vaccination.

Response from Councillor Wong-Tam: This is a really positive move that this population has been elevated to Phase 1 and the Board of Health has been lobbying for their inclusion in Phase 1. The more we reduce transmission, the sooner we'll all be safer.

Q: What can people do if they see someone experiencing homelessness that they are concerned about. Who do they call? Who can help them?

Response from Mitchell Lamont, Street to Homes, City of Toronto: The way to contact the Streets to Homes team that is on 24/7, 365 days a year, is through 311. We work alongside YMCA, Agincourt Services etc. and other partner agencies. We have a multi-disciplinary outreach team (MDOT) including outreach workers, housing workers, and access to a psychiatrist and a nurse. Our team will respond within a four-hour window.

2.2 About the site and the length of the program

Attendees asked the following questions about the duration of the lease of the site for emergency shelter use, and plans for the future use of the site.

Q: Is the hotel permanently closed and if the shelter does not renew its lease in January 2022 does that mean the property is ripe for other development?

Response from Justin Lewis, City of Toronto: What we know currently is that the lease is until February of 2022. That is dependent on restrictions for the pandemic. What happens after is really up to the hotel owner as we are a tenant in the space. We can't say what will happen after. The City of Toronto lease is valid until February 2022.

Response from Councillor Wong-Tam: Under the Planning Act, property owners have the right to seek changes to their property. If there is going to be any change in zoning or built form, it will have to go through a planning application process that includes community consultation. I have not received any inquiries from the property owner to seek any changes for future use or alterations, as of now. If they do come forward, you will be notified and we'll move that through a planning consultation process. There are no re-zoning inquiries as of now.

Q: When COVID is less of a threat can the hotel accommodate more people? Does the lease say there has to be a maximum of 37? Can it go up to 200? I do have concerns about safety in the area. A lot of services are lumped in this one area and they're all along Isabella St within a block and a half of each other.

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: The capacity of Clubbe House is 36. It can't go any higher. It's not a drop-in service. It's a shelter and it has room for 36 people.

Response from Justin Lewis, City of Toronto: There are no additional rooms at 556 Sherbourne and we are not looking to increase the capacity over 36.

2.3 Programs and operations within St. Simon's Clubbe House

Several attendees had questions regarding the various services, programs, and operations offered within and around the shelter.

Q: Can you clarify the dates for when the service is going to operate? When will the existing shelter at 525 Bloor Street East close and how long will the shelter at 556 Sherbourne Street operate?

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: The shelter at 525 Bloor Street East is closing on May 31st, 2021. Operations at 556 Sherbourne will go until February 2022.

Response from Justin Lewis, City of Toronto: There is a year-long lease at 556 Sherbourne Street. It's a temporary shelter. The timelines are also

dependent on pandemic-related public health guidelines so we will revisit that if needed.

Q: You mentioned that there are going to be wraparound services at the site but what exactly are those services?

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: At St. Simon's Clubbe House we offer:

- primary health care services
- housing support services - to help identify the appropriate next step of housing. We work with people to make sure their documents are in place for that and continue to follow-up with them once they're housed to prevent eviction.
- social recreation and education including working toward family reunification. Work with people to facilitate safe return to their community of origin if that's their desire.
- Good healthy food
- Employment support, including helping people get necessary documents for employment. We have a relationship with a local bank and staff have come and helped our clients open bank accounts and waived some of the documentation requirements with the shelter affirming their identities.

Q: Is it going to be all current service users from the current location being moved to the new location or will there also be new clients?

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: The 18 existing users from 525 Bloor Street East have been transferred over to Clubbe House already. We are also doing intake to fill the other 18 rooms at 556 Sherbourne to bring the total up to 36.

We opened on Monday Feb 22 and it's been a graduated ramp-up to allow people to settle and for us to work with them to get them properly oriented. That will continue on a graduated basis until we reach the maximum capacity of 36. We've found that it's been positive so far.

Q: Is the shelter open to the service users 24/7? Or do they leave the shelter in the mornings to spend the day outside?

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: Residents are allowed to remain onsite 24/7 and they can leave and return. We do have guidelines like two curfew times. 11pm is a soft curfew - we ask people to tell us if they can't make it. 1am is the harder curfew. We do this to ensure that beds are not going

unused and also to ensure the safety of our residents. They can ask for an overnight pass if it's contributing to meeting some of the goals in their case management plan. We're okay with people staying in during the day which helps with COVID-19 restrictions.

We have a safety and wellness plan. Rooms are checked throughout the day. We check that people are in their rooms. They sign in and sign out - that's part of life and safety protocols. We always know how many folks are on site and how many are off site.

Q: Has there been any consideration to the fact that a restaurant is attached to the facility and there is a children's park a stone's throw away from the hotel?

Response from Justin Lewis, City of Toronto: When we're not in a pandemic we do a lot more robust site selection but at this time we were looking for sites that would meet our minimum requirements (outlined in the presentation). We look at the bylaws, the housing charter, zoning requirements, being close to community services like parks, pharmacies and health care services. Residents in this shelter are citizens within the community so having access to a park may be good for their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We look for proximity to services like parks, libraries, recreation centres because they are members of our community.

Response from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: About the restaurant - Gabby's - we're committed to local procurement and we have a contract with Gabby's to provide meals for us. We're committed to putting our dollars back into the same community. Thanks to the Councillor's office for helping us coordinate this and to the City for the funding that makes it possible.

So far we've met with the following neighbouring businesses:

- Paul's Roti Shop across the road has provided Friday night dinner at the shelter and our residents loved it.
- We're buying gift cards from the local Tim Horton's franchise. These are given to people who first arrive with nothing whose support services aren't set up yet.
- Lord's Pharmacy on Wellesley: we'll be purchasing all our first aid supplies and some harm reduction supplies from them.
- We've reached out to St. James Town Steak & Chops and Red Cranberries Restaurant on Parliament and plan to offer rotating Friday night meals from different local restaurants.
- Royal Home Hardware on Parliament: once they can re-open we can buy some of our housekeeping and cleaning products from them.

Q: Will you be offering overdose prevention services in house? The nearest outside site is rather far away from the hotel.

Answer from Bob Duff, St. Simon's: Yes, we will offer this in-house in ways tailored specifically for our existing service users. We have set up a wellness program and wellness check and we're working on refining to ensure that any using onsite within the privacy of someone's room takes place with peer support or staff monitoring. All staff are trained in administering naloxone to reverse an overdose. Sgt Dyck can attest to this - at our previous site we had five overdoses and because of quick intervention those people are still alive and with us today. We're aware of what's plaguing us. We're aware of opioid issues. We work to provide other alternatives and to support people. With us there is no shame and no blame - we're supporting one another through this plague.

Councillor Wong-Tam invited Sgt. Henry Dyck of Toronto Police Services to speak in general about community safety:

Response from Sgt. Dyck, Toronto Police Services: I'm not concerned about the residents of St. Simon's. We've had very few radio calls related to that service over the last 5 years. I'm sure they will run a good program. I have some concerns about people who may be referred to the new beds but we'll have to take that as it comes because we don't know who they will be. There have been a number of concerns from neighbours about unwanted behaviour near the buildings and stairwells and some trespassing concerns. We will monitor that closely. One benefit in this area is we have dedicated Neighbourhood Community Officers and they will work closely with the site. If the community recognizes issues we'll make sure the Neighbourhood Community Officers are engaged to work toward solutions.

3.0 Next Steps

St. Simon's Clubbe House began accepting residents the week of February 22, 2021, and is expected to remain operational through the duration of the lease until February 2022.

Following the public meeting the presentation slide deck was posted to the City web page: www.toronto.ca/physicaldistancingsites.

A bulletin will be created to share further details pertaining to this site which will be posted on City [webpage](#). Community members can contact Community Engagement Facilitator directly at 556sherbourne@gmail.com and request to be added to email distribution list.

A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) may be established with membership and input from the existing organizations in the area. The CLC could include interested representatives of residents, businesses, and community organizations who are interested in identifying and problem-solving concerns and challenges related to the shelter. The CLC would work in collaboration with shelter operators and City staff to promote the success of the shelter in the community. Please contact Jane Farrow, Community Engagement Facilitator, at 556sherbourne@gmail.com if interested in finding out more about establishing a CLC for St Simon's Clubbe House.

APPENDIX 1: Public Meeting Staff Attendees

Organization	Staff Name and Title
City of Toronto, Shelter Support Housing & Administration	Justin Lewis, Director, Infrastructure Planning & Development Brad Boucher, Manager Operations Alexandra Vamos, Manager, Planning and Engagement Robyn Shyllit, Supervisor, Stakeholder & Community Engagement Carolyn Doyle, Program Coordinator Leslie O'Reilly, Housing Consultant Homelessness Initiatives & Prevention Services Suhail Ahmed, Policy Development Officer Zoonah Khalid, Program Coordinator Mitchell Lamont, Acting Supervisor, Streets to Homes
City of Toronto, Toronto Centre- Ward 13	Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam
St. Simon's Clubbe House	Bob Duff, Executive Director
Toronto Police Service	Sergeant Henry Dyck
Community Engagement	Jane Farrow, Third Party Community Engagement Facilitator Leah Birnbaum and Sneha Mandhan, Note takers