

City of Toronto COHB Renewal Strategy Update

TAEH THHSP Forum

July 12, 2023



Overview

- COHB Program
- COHB Shelter Relief Stream
 - Year 3 outcomes
 - Year 4 outcomes
- Renewal Strategy
- Program Evaluation
- Advocacy

Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Program

- **Portable housing benefit** to assist with rental costs in the private housing market. The benefit is tied to the household and can be used to help pay rent **anywhere in Ontario**
- **Provincial Federal program** - part of the National Housing Strategy
- Program launched on April 1, 2020
- The COHB program funding ends on **March 31, 2029**
- Recipients must be removed from the Centralized Waiting List

COHB Summary

Program Year	Funding Allocation	Households Served
Year 1 (2020-2021)	\$7.75M	1,162
Year 2 (2021-2022)	\$2.3M	292
Year 3 (2022-2023)	\$12.25M	Provincial forecast 900 – 1,200 Actual 2,035
Year 4 (2023-2024)	\$9.48M	Provincial forecast 650 – 800 Actual 960
TOTAL	\$31.78M	4,389

- The **Shelter Relief Stream** was introduced in Year 3, April 2022 .
 - Eligibility criteria
 - COHB Provincial Program Guideline criteria
 - 3 months of homelessness
 - Referred by an approved community partner
 - Secured a rental tenancy

COHB Year 3 Outcomes – Highlights

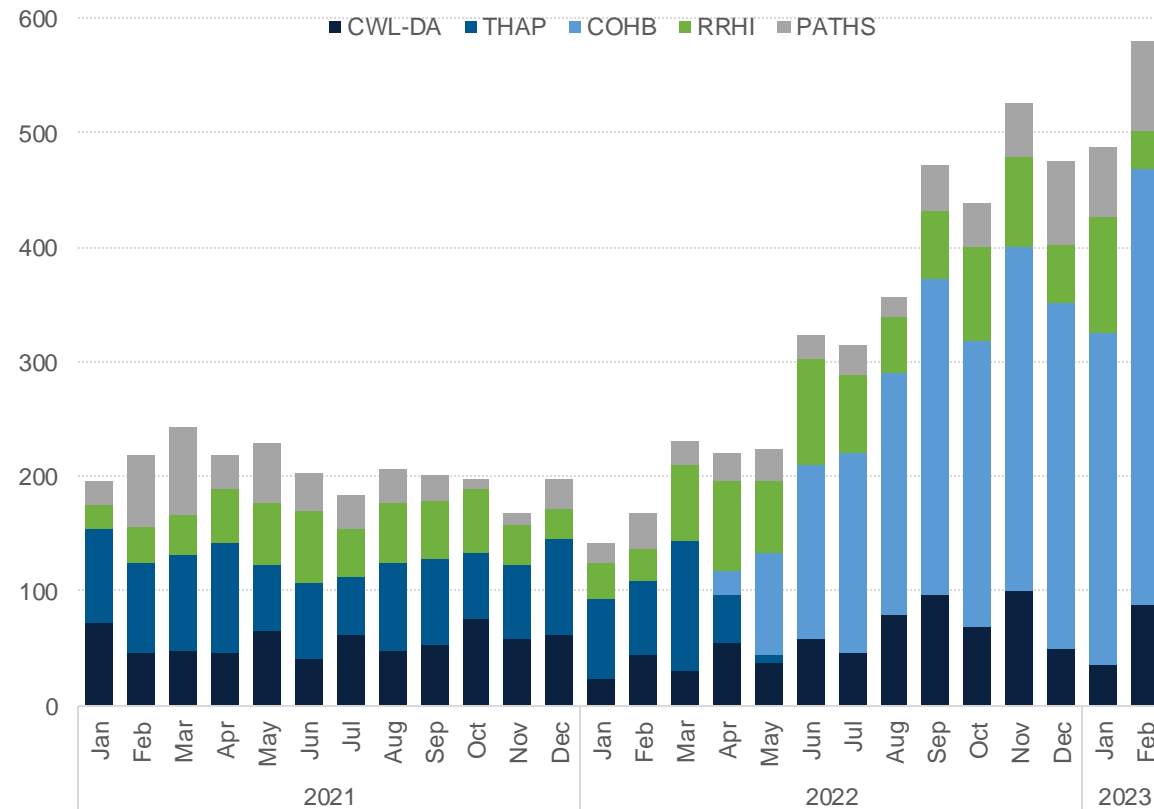
- **1,644** shelter residents received COHB through the **Shelter Relief Stream** making up over **80%** of all COHB applications
 - COHB quickly became the **leading pathway** for shelter residents from homelessness to permanent housing.
 - **Average monthly take up increased continually** throughout the program to **275 per month**
 - **64%** of Shelter Relief COHB recipients were **refugee households**
- **300 Indigenous households** received COHB under the City's *Meeting in the Middle* commitments.
- Take up exceeded the original Provincial allocation by **over 700** new applications.

COHB Year 4 Outcomes – Highlights

- COHB Year 3 ended **February 28, 2023**
- COHB Year 4 started **April 1, 2023**
- A City funded **transition payment** was put in place to bridge the gap to allow continuous intake between program years.
- Over **960 shelter residents** received COHB through the **Shelter Relief Stream** making up over **90%** of all COHB applications
- **78%** of Shelter Relief COHB recipients were **refugee households**
- Funding for COHB Year 4 was exhausted May 12, 2023

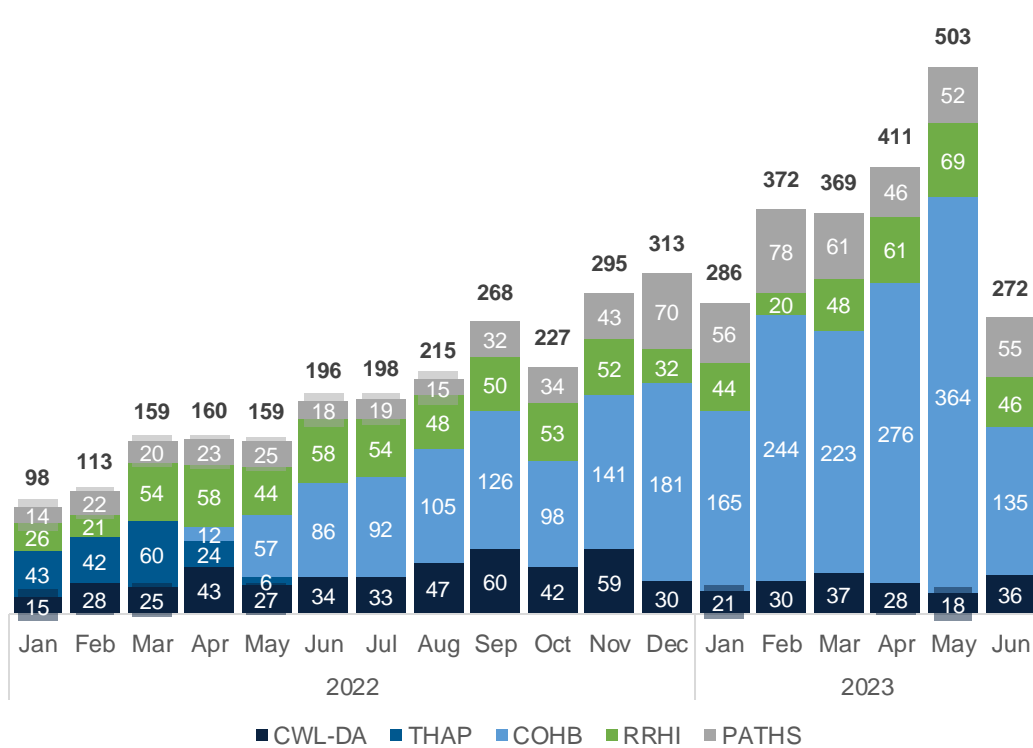
2022-23 Housing Outcomes by Program

Total individuals housed
by key housing placement programs

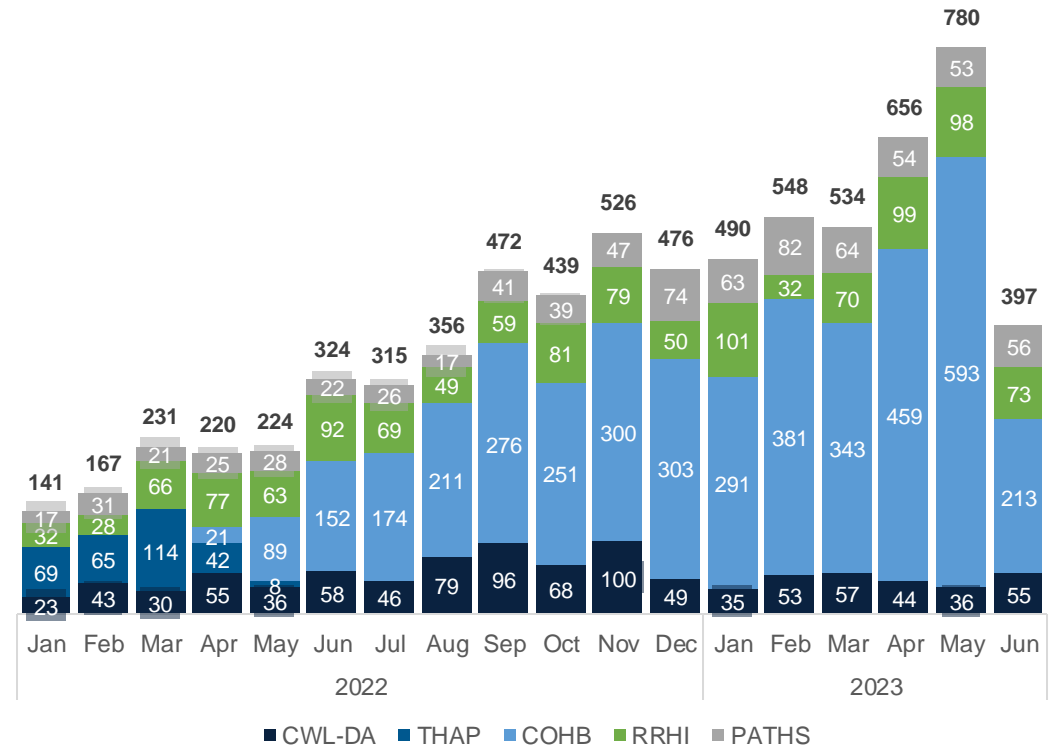


Shelter & homelessness housing placement program outcomes

Households



People



Renewal Strategy

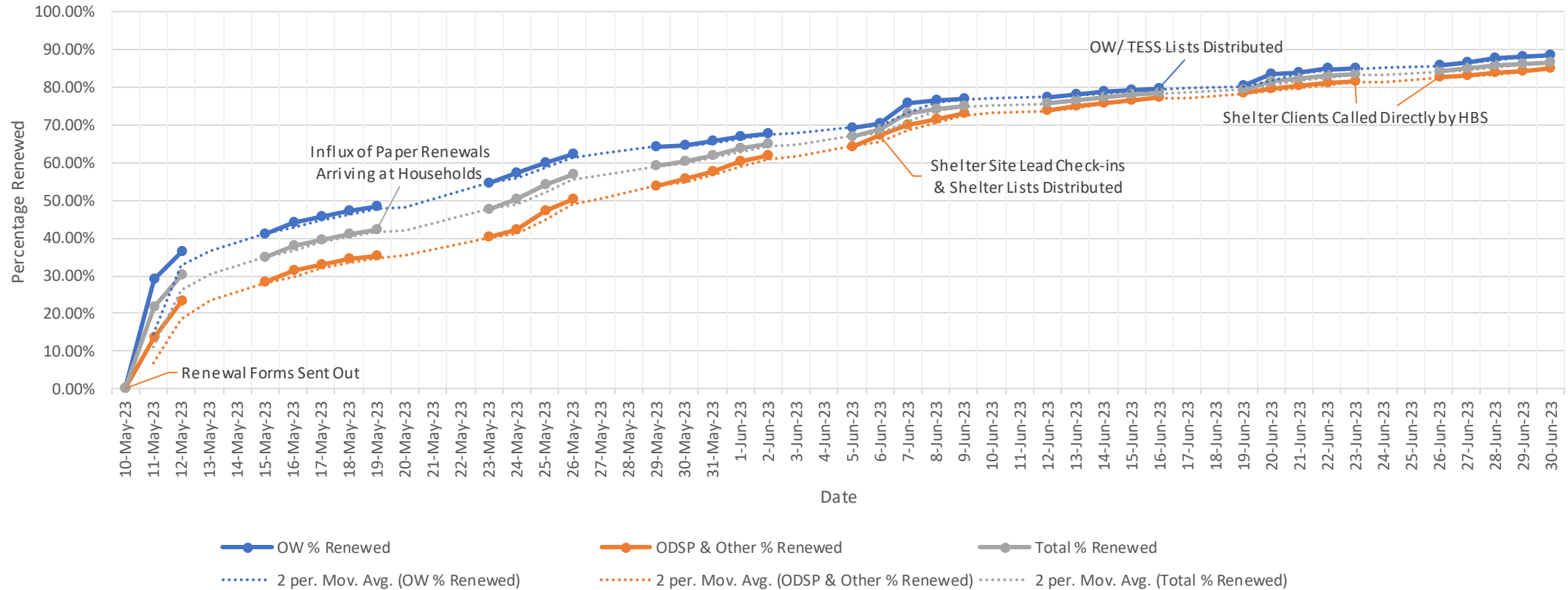
- Over **1,600** former shelter residents must complete the annual renewal process in 2023 or risk losing the benefit.
- Housing Stability Services is leading a cross Divisional Renewal Strategy to contact and support Shelter Relief stream recipients to maintain their benefit and remain housed.
 - This includes coordination with:
 - Shelter Partners
 - OW and ODSP Caseworkers
 - Housing Follow-up Workers

Renewal Strategy Cont'd

- Partners provided with contact lists of COHB recipients with outstanding renewals that were:
 - referred by the Agency (Shelter Partners),
 - in receipt of a benefit (OW/ ODSP caseworkers), or
 - referred for follow-up supports (Housing Follow-up Workers)
- Other supports provided by HBS:
 - Virtual Training Sessions
 - Q & A document
 - Script
 - Resources for completing tax returns

Renewal Strategy Cont'd

% of Households Renewed Over Time (2023)



Program Evaluation

- Starting at the end of Year 4 of the COHB program implementation, the HS will collect and analyze COHB applicant and recipient outcome data to assess the impact of the program.
- Areas of focus for evaluation will include:
 - adequacy of the benefit
 - contributions to housing stability
 - equitable access to the benefit
 - system-level impacts
- The evaluation will be informed by program data and outcomes analysis, community partner surveys and a business process review

Program Evaluation – Shelter Partner Survey

- Survey distributed/ available to Site Leads, Counsellors, and any other housing staff who administer COHB within the Shelter Relief System
 - Survey closed June 10th with 150 responses
- Primary areas of focus for the survey were:
 - Impact of staff turnover on Agency Staff program knowledge
 - Adequacy of benefit
 - Types of housing being accessed
 - Housing stability impact
 - Barriers to housing access
 - Landlord engagement
 - Barriers to accessing COHB process
- Data is currently being analyzed for recommendations to improve service delivery

Advocacy

- Advocacy is ongoing to increase allocations to the City of Toronto to “build on the **demonstrated success** of the COHB program to move households experiencing homelessness into permanent housing”.
- City Council approved a request to the federal and provincial governments to urgently allocate an additional \$20 million in COHB funding to help between 1,600 and 2,000 households to exit the shelter system and move into permanent housing.



Questions?