

# Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service System Planning Forum

## September 14, 2022

**Date and time:** September 14, 2022; 10:00am – 12:00pm

**Zoom:** <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81861085583>

### 1. Introduction and Housekeeping

### 2. Land Recognition (Savhanna Wilson, TAEH)

### 3. SSHA Items and Updates – Update from Stephanie Malcher on shelter system flow data (SSHA)

- Link to shelter system flow data: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/shelter-system-flow-data/>
- The July 15 data is currently publically available; data from the preceding month is updated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month.
- Stephanie shared draft version of the August data that will be shared on September 15.
  - In August, it is fairly balanced and even
  - Comparing the movement to permanent housing in 2022 to 2021, we were a bit behind last year's YTD comparison until July and now we have exceeded last year's. There were 2,372 people who moved to permanent housing in August 2021 compared to 2,589 people in August 2022
  - Second tab on the screen highlights the historical trends tab. It allows us to see in a bit more detail the trends over time. Another highlight that is providing some hope in terms of what we are seeing is the stabilization of the current population. Since January 2021, we have seen a constant increase in people experiencing chronic homelessness. Even though there are a lot of efforts to address it, there has not been much of a decrease. Over the past few months, there has been a stabilization and slightly going down.
  - Last highlight is around Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. The Indigenous identifier question was changed in October 2020 in partnership with Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB). Given the new question, TICAB and SSHA agreed to only provide data from February 2021. From that time, we saw a fairly steady increase in Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. Since March 2022, we have seen a steady month over month decrease in Indigenous homelessness. In March, there were 1,200 Indigenous people experiencing homelessness and that has decreased to 971 in August 2022. The decrease reflects the commitment of the housing and homelessness sector to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.
  - Areas of concern identified:
    - Filter for refugees: there has been an increasing number of refugees since mid-2021. The number increases every day and every month. It continues to rise and is of concern. Refugees

represent nearly half of the new people entering the shelter system in August. There has been an increase in the number of refugees experiencing homelessness moving to permanent housing over the past few months.

- Filter for youth: there is not a meaningful decrease in youth homelessness. Even though it is a bit more of a reduction; there is no meaningful decrease.
  - Return to shelters from permanent housing: consistent / stable number of 70-90 people returning from permanent housing to shelters. That has been steady for approximately 18 months and barely budges despite efforts such as EPIC, rent bank and other items. Work is underway to stabilize tenancy and there is a fairly robust follow up program. Despite that, we still see people who have moved to permanent housing returning to the shelter system.
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- **Q:** Now that we have some baseline data, and we can do some trend analysis, exits to housing and cascading those targets to the sector and to agencies?
  - **A:** We are doing some work on establishing a committee to monitor the priority groups. Likely that could be part of the work. We would want to monitor that in partnership with the sector. It is important for frontline staff to see themselves represented in the work. The work they do with individual clients gets reflected in larger data
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- **Q:** What has led to the increase in housing outcomes? Also, do we know who is being housed? Eg. Low, medium or high needs individuals?
  - **A:** We don't have that information. The Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) is being rolled out and that is making a difference. COHB is a portable housing benefit moving to the private market. Hopefully we can see higher functioning folks use that benefit and then those who need higher supports go to other locations such as 292 Parliament and 222 Spadina.
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- **Q:** Do we know country of origin?
  - **A:** SMIS doesn't capture that data. We don't collect that data.
  - **A:** (from forum member Patricia Mueller): We run a refugee program for single adults. We primarily have Ugandan and Nigerian people and a group of people who had been human trafficked from Mexico. Most people have been from the West African diaspora.
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- **Q:** Do we have a chart showing a follow-up overtime of those that were moved into permanent housing?
  - **A:** We have done some analysis on that before on tracking returns to permanent housing. I don't have that right now. We have done tracking about people going to permanent housing, how likely it is for them to return to shelters. It may be a matter of saving an existing tenancy which is some of the work that we have been doing. My team has been doing some work to follow up with this population group and have managed to save 15 tenancy groups. A number of them have been around unit takeovers and our team has been involved in connecting with

landowners, connecting with folks who have taken over the site, and changing locks. It would be great to do it at a more systemic level.

- **Q:** In terms of returns, what is the threshold that moves someone to returns? Is there a certain amount of time? Certain supports? What feeds into that?
- **A:** My colleague Wonda does all of the fantastic data work. It means someone was previously discharged in the previous month and returned for a night in a shelter during the current month. We understand there may be someone who returns for one night and then goes back to their permanent housing. It is something that we have thought about and how we may account for that in the data.

#### 4. **Housing Secretariat Items and Updates** (Valesa Faria, Director, Housing Policy & Strategy, Housing Secretariat)

- Representatives from Housing Secretariat at the meeting also included Abi Bond (Executive Director), Matt Hilder (Manager of Program Management) and Noah Slater (Development Director)
- Refer to slide deck presentation delivered by Matt Hilder: Creating new affordable and supportive housing at 65 Dundas St. E.
  - Web page: [www.toronto.ca/65Dundas](http://www.toronto.ca/65Dundas)
- **Q:** It will have a couple of hundred units. What is the range of affordability and how is that being structured? How is it getting the mix within the building?
- **A:** One of the program requirements of RHI – no building is rented at more than 30%. A certain percentage will be supportive housing. We are looking at range of incomes but the threshold stands. There are lessons learned from RHI Phase 1 - 877 Yonge Street and we will be taking that experience into 65 Dundas St. E.
- **Q:** Is occupancy for all adults?
- **A:** We are working with Dixon Hall about what it will be. There are some commitments with CMHC and [Housing Now](#). Prioritized groups such as Black Canadians and racialized people experiencing homelessness will be taken into consideration. The program is considered for adults.
- **Q:** Is the community liaison responsible for the signage at the hotel informing people of the closure?
- **A:** Yes and Dixon Hall is a key partner on that. We have been working with Dixon Hall and Streets to Homes to communicate directly with shelter residents. It is Dixon Hall who has relationships with clients who are doing the leg work
- **Q:** Do you have a percentage of what the mix will look like? (e.g. at least 10% for supportive housing?)
- **A:** Confident that it will be more than 10% but we are still sorting out what the mix of affordable and supportive housing mix will look like.
- **Q:** Just wondering what the economic demographic mix will be in the building.

- **A:** Still figuring out best approach. Looking at examples from other cities where there is a mixture of affordable and supportive housing. That is what the program development work will be focused on.
- **A: (Abi Bond):** To reframe the question – we are interested to hear from you as we undertake these program discussions. What could be a successful population group of people within a building? There is not that much information available. We are keen to learn from your experience as housing providers. Likely we will want to have a discussion on what will work here. We would welcome that discussion around program development.
- **Q:** Part of the national strategy is developmental disability. What is the planning around connections that might be made and how to reach those target groups? Developmental disability could be very hard to reach in terms of a target group. Would that be done as a partnership with a particular organization (e.g. 877 Yonge)? I am asking in context of Abi's suggestion to connect. You don't see much around lessons learned or best practices around that. It would be helpful to document lessons learned and developments for the future.
- **A:** Phase 1 from 877 Yonge was one of the first shelter acquisitions. The eventual program depends on the partnerships in place. Similar to Abi's comment – the wisdom of the group will be critical to ensure that it is done right.
- **A: Forum participant:** It is important to document all of this. How do we document all of the work we are doing and the discussions that we are having? Documenting processes, policies and procedures and how decisions are being made. We have had some discussions on how we can document all of this and it is something we are considering in terms of documenting future learnings.

## 5. Shelter Transition, Shelter Capacity, and Shelter Acquisition

- Panel and discussion on the current state of the shelter system and plans moving forward
- Tarik Bacchus – Manager, Covid Transition & Relocation (10 minutes)
  - See slide presentation
- David Reycraft – Director of Housing Services, Dixon Hall (10 minutes)
  - See slide presentation
- Sonja Nerad – Executive Director, Toronto Shelter Network (10 minutes)
  - See slide presentation
- Facilitated Discussion – Savhanna Wilson, TAEH (15 minutes)
- **Q:** Are there comments or response from City staff having listened to Sonja's presentation? I think it was spot on not only in terms of identification of issues but solutions in high level sense.
- **A (Joseph Stalteri):** I know these are points that we have been in discussion with for the last little while. We certainly hear those pressures but know the sector has been experiencing over the last 2.5 years in particular. The City is looking at and continuing to work with all of you on identifying options to address the pressures that we are experiencing. Sonja made important points. It is not a Toronto only problem or something that Toronto alone will have solutions for. We

are continuing to work with colleagues at provincial and federal governments – especially around refugees. There are some actions already underway. It will be likely an incremental implementation. We are certainly aware and are very committed to find those solutions that work for all of you and more importantly that help get the folks we serve and get folks into sustainable housing and integrate into affordable housing effectively.

- **A (Ashleigh Dalton):** There are a number of things in the [Homelessness Solutions Service Plan](#) that line up with the points identified by TAEH and TSN, such as needing more diversion programs and housing benefits, as well as looking at specific population approaches. We feel the system pressure. We feel it in the City. I really appreciate the urgency of Sonja and the sector. A lot of the points resonate and are the same things we are trying to advocate for as well. The help in pushing it forward is appreciated.
- **Q:** Sonja mentioned the RHI a couple of times and mentioned resourcing the Housing Secretariat. There was also mention of developing supportive housing approaches and there being particular issues with the needs of fitting with certain client populations. Where is that coming from and how can I take that back?
- **A (Panelist - Sonja Nerad):** I will probably hand it over to colleagues who know more than I do. My sense is the HS is between the federal program and the housing providers and trying to make these things fit together. I appreciate the challenge. As the body that is trying to make that work, my sense is call on the housing providers to help figure out how to negotiate with the federal government. We don't have a lot of these opportunities and we really want to do service to people who need it. We can't imagine how important this is to so many people. Make sure that the models are working.
- **A (Panelist - David Reycraft):** We recognize that there are populations over represented in the shelter system who have unique needs. As we develop this model and it evolves, there is opportunity to reach out to those communities and support them in access to affordable and deeply affordable housing. We need support models. We opened up the Friends of Ruby. Those kinds of responses are critically important. Transitional housing to meet the needs of those communities.
- **A (Forum):** Models need to meet homeless individuals who require really high supports. This is something that I hear from TSN. I also hear from colleagues in housing. We need to develop housing solutions that provide as close to 24 hour supports as possible and provide the continuum of supports for individuals with extreme mental health, extreme addictions and that may not always work in a mixed housing model. The concern that my colleagues are voicing to me is that high needs clients will be squeezed out of a mixed housing model because low support individuals will fit better. Modular housing should be designed for folks with high support needs in mind.
- **A (Panelist - David Reycraft):** Thank you for saying that. It is very important and salient at the Bond. We are decanting floors 4-8 and working on where to send people with the highest needs. Over the past few years, we have articulated the importance of harm reduction and we have a harm reduction directive. We need

a medicalized model where we can support people who are living with addictions and mental health and transition people to where there is continuity of support.

- **A (Panelist - Sonya Nerad):** I would love to sit with SSHA and HS and to present a report that we are working on which puts forward our vision. From implementation perspective, in terms of puzzle pieces, there are a lot of resources going to shelter system. If we could refocus money going to shelters into housing. Of course we have provincial support dollars. The made-in-Toronto piece is us. Lots of smarts at this table to take these pieces and move them around and make it work differently. And then beg forgiveness afterwards. Would love to continue to have discussions.
- **Q:** Think it important to recognize that housing help centres do see homeless clients, however, we do not have access to COHB and other resources to support the clients. We often have difficulty accessing the central shelter intake line to help clients find shelter support.
- **A (Savhanna Wilson):** Frontline service providers being asked to support people and also meet their own housing needs. The compensation is pretty inequitable compared to the level of support they are asked to provide. When we talk about resource allocation – staff retention is a big issue. Need to have these conversations here as well.
- **Q:** Is this exploration being held by a TAEH Work Group?
- **A (Savhanna Wilson):** We are relaunching working groups soon. Housing development has already begun and underway. First meeting will be in October. I think this is a conversation that is a little bit of a catch all. There are elements that may fit into multiple working groups. My role is to weave collaborative work and that the conversations happening is showing up in action plans on the ground. Victor to call Savanna about questions
- **A (Panelist - David Reycraft):** A system transformation table will be coming in the coming days.
- **Q:** Thank you to the forum for providing space to talk about challenges about rent café and COHB for high need individuals. We have realized problems and challenges in the community and engaged the city in conversations. Would the next step be a work group to emerge city staff and providers to do a work group to combat challenges? A collaborative task based approach for collaborative approach.
- **A (Savhanna Wilson):** We are re launching working groups and seeing what new ones may come up. Anyone who is interested in learning more about the work groups can connect with Savhanna. Savhanna will provide a working group rundown at the next forum, what the groups are / their strategic goals and how they will roll out. Email for Savhanna: [savhanna@taeh.ca](mailto:savhanna@taeh.ca) .

## 6. TAEH updates

- 2022 Municipal Election

- TAEH shared updates on the work they are doing to raise the profile of homelessness during this election cycle.
- See slide deck presentation

#### 7. Emerging priorities

- Environmental scan to inform future agendas
- We will be organizing forums each month about particular challenges – opportunity for TAEH and SSHA to engage with folks and see the challenges that people are experiencing. If there is an idea for a topic, love to hear it.
- Forum – Anti-Black Racism, anti-oppression approaches, looking at initiatives in the sector.
- Chat box:
  - Think it important to recognize that housing help centres do see homeless clients, however, we do not have access to COHB and other resources to support the clients. We often have difficulty accessing the Central Intake to help clients find shelter support.
  - a harm reduction housing model like in BC
  - High support harm reduction approach would be great to explore

#### 8. Other business / close

**Next meeting:** October 12, 2022, 10:00am-12:00pm