



Toronto Housing and Homelessness Services Planning Forum

December 13, 2023 - 10:00am – 12:00pm

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89197109916>

1. Introduction- Co-Chair-Ashleigh Dalton-Manager of Strategic Policy and Service Planning (SPSP) at Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), City of Toronto.
2. Land Acknowledgement- Ashleigh Dalton.
3. SSHA Items and Updates – Update from Trish Lenz on shelter system flow data (SSHA)
See slide deck / presentation.

Q. When you look at the data for the people returning to shelter, or leaving permanent housing, I presume the returns of permanent shelter as people who started couch surfing or were in an encampment as opposed to people who were housed because you have that permanent housing bar? So, it is only those people who have failed at being housed. Is that fair?

Answer (Trish). We do an assessment for return for permanent housing if they have been discharged into permanent housing and then if their SMIS ID is active. So, you can become inactive in the shelter system and then return.

Q. Is it possible to determine from the data you collect how long people were housed before they returned to the shelter from permanent housing?

Answer (Trish) Yes, based on when they left the shelter system, it is dependent upon that. I am sure we could look into that. Like you are curious about the flow of people like how long they have been versus when they are coming back versus the gap from when they left the system.

(Q) The specific question would be looking at trying to ascribe the reasons for return. If it is a short-term return, that is a different reason, perhaps than someone who is being housed for three years and then they return. Because one of the things we want to do of course, is to ensure that when we do get people into permanent housing, we give them the support they need to be able to stick in the housing. And that information might be useful in assessing the efficiency of that, of that support at that point, once they are taken out of the shelter system.

Answer (Trish) Yes, I can definitely speak to that at another meeting. In the past, we have done an analysis of how long people have been outside of the shelter system before transitioning back and Toronto does have a relatively low overall return to shelter when compared with other North American Cities. So that is always a great thing for us, is that in general, when we compare to other cities, we are doing well with respect to returning to homelessness. But I could either come back to this forum or connect offline about some of the work that is being done to further break down that data.



Refugee Intergovernmental Work- Vera Dodic, Project Director, Refugee Response, SSHA.

See slide deck / presentation.

Q. I was also delighted to hear that you were talking about working with the federal government and pushing them to do more of this work, because in the same way, I think that Toronto was taken aback to find that newcomers and refugees were a larger part of the homeless population now. The federal government has not yet caught up and so for instance, the current call from IRCC to provide settlements support, there are these thousands of people who cannot be served, even though they have arrived here making claims going through the process. There might be settlement services in Cornwall and Niagara, but they are not eligible for any federal settlement services. So, we have got a huge gap of maybe we are going to providing them a bed, but we have not welcomed them in any other substantial way. So, I am hoping that the conversation between the city and the fed is that they need to step up further.

Ans (Vera)- Excellent points. We have been advocating for settlement service eligibility to be extended to refugee claimants, as well. And they know that Toronto local immigration partnerships have been doing the same for many years. As far as claimants in these other locations that are now in these other locations. I do understand from MLIT, the TSD that they encouraged applications for this funding from these locations. So, I believe that it will be provided although this people are no longer in Toronto, we will continue to advocate for them as well. It is important, so it is not only important that the City of Toronto is doing well. As far as refugees and as far as anything else. It is important the whole of our province and the whole of our country is doing well. So, we will continue being focused on that.

C/Q- Are many individuals yet to make a refugee claim, but are these individuals still recorded as refugees within SSHA's data? Are these in addition to the claimants described earlier?

ANS (Vera)- Very good point. It is impossible for us to know how many people have not made their claims yet based on anecdotal data primarily from Peter Street and from the two Churches when we are doing these transfers because we must submit to IRCC their names, their UCI numbers. we can see that because people that have told us that they are refugees in fact have not made their claims yet as far as the City's shelter system - we don't check their papers. So, we rely on what the clients say when they are at intake. We do know with certain data that we can see from our TESS office when people are applying from OW because status is required there. So those that haven't applied for refugee status yet are not eligible to receive OW. And from these numbers, we see that there is a significant spike in Toronto as far as refugee claimants beyond the numbers of refugee claimants in the shelter system, but as far as statistics are concerned, that is probably a mix of people that have made their claims already and those that are yet to make their claims.

Housing Secretariat Items and Updates

Housing TO Update – Mercedeh Madani, Manager of Housing System & Intelligence, Housing Secretariat. See slide deck / presentation.



Q. There was a brief part of your presentation that had to do with that housing access also any focused on the COHB. I am wondering where the choice based access to housing system fits into the plan? In terms of access, the conversation was around getting people in the private market.

Ans (Mercedeh) When we do a housing to update report, we go into a lot more than just our targets. The Housing Secretariat has a dedicated team access to housing that works specifically around managing the waitlist and centralized waitlist for social housing. So, they have continued to, to do that. The two updates that I have from 2022 and 2023. For the first time, introduced a local priority rule for indigenous households, to be able to get prioritized for access to rent geared to income housing, as well as a new opportunity to help people who have been living in supportive housing but might no longer need supportive housing to move to our RGI housing without support to create that flow in the system. So again, the target was specifically set for COHB and housing allowance but that doesn't take away from the good work that the team is doing around managing the centralized waitlist and making sure that people who are on the on the waitlist can get access to those our RGI units as they become available.

Follow up comment. I know that there's a plan to increase participation in the system that's going to Council and the economic and community development committee in February, and it would be great if somebody from the Housing Secretariat would be able to come to this forum and chat to us about what those changes are to the system in terms of improvements around housing flow.

Response Ans (Mercedeh) Absolutely, I'll make sure that our manager of access to housing is aware and we can hopefully work to put that on the agenda for next year.

Comment/Question. I looked at the numbers in the in the report for actions, the generational transformation, there was an attachment to the report that listed the affordable houses built to date. We're talking about the action plan numbers are for 65,000 homes to be built by 2030 that are affordable housing. And even if you include all of the currently approved developments, which are in construction are expected to actually break ground between now and 2030. We're still going to have a deficit of 48,000 units, little over 48,000 units.

It's frustrating to just have the numbers presented without a record recognition that there's a concern with translating approved developments into actual developments being constructed. And we're running out of time. The timeframe between initial approval and people moving into developments is four to six years. I wish that we could get a bit more not just putting the numbers but analyzing the numbers in the context of where we would need to be to achieve the goals of the plan, and what the city's ideas are of how to address the deficit between the annualized goals and the actual occupancy rates that we have.

I think it would be helpful for us to be speaking to those issues, because we have a whole group of people here who may be will be able to contribute to that conversation. And just reporting numbers like this may lull us into a false sense that we're doing well and that's why it's so dangerous to make graphs that refer to approve developments as opposed to graphs that show if you'd use the graph that had 708 houses compared to 65,000.



Response (Mercedeh) That's a good point. We are very much mindful of the fact that people cannot live in approvals. That's the first step. A few things that I can just share again, just around data and analysis like so we are adding that component to our dashboard and the new year to also report on what's under construction and what's getting built. We're very transparent about that, but also certainly will report the generational transformation of the housing system report. There are a number of actions not only for the city to streamline the review process and approval process at the at the local level. But also, the help that we need from other orders of government in terms of funding and financing. That can help us turn these approvals to actual homes, and a recommendation for us that I know how it has already started with this group around identifying additional land that's owned by the non-profit sector. We are working with the non-profit sector to identify lands that they have that can be intensified. The city has put in a list of about 50 sites that can be activated but knowing that that again that is the first step.

Follow up comment. Council today is going to be reviewing the Toronto Ontario New Deal and there's a lot in there. About new funding for housing. So, would it be possible for the next time you report to the forum to be able to fold that in? That would be really appreciated.

Response (Mercadeh) Absolutely. At that point and at when we have our budget city budget dealt with in February/March 2024. And in addition to that, we also have the housing accelerator fund coming forward in this council cycle. So hopefully we can combine all of that and do a report on funding that has been has become available and toward the next round.

Question. Are we still expecting half a billion for the accelerator fund?

Ans (Mercadeh) Yes

Question. Is anybody at the city tracking the loss of actual affordable housing in the sense from all the rent evictions and the redevelopment that's happening in the city of Toronto? That is actually a very significant number in terms of the loss that happens. So, you can build it as fast as you want. But if you're losing it at a much, much faster rate than you're building it, you're going nowhere.

Ans (Mercedeh) In our data hub, we have a section that covers kind of the number of rental units approved for demolition and for replacement so we have started some of that work and making sure that we're tracking that number. We are happy to take any additional comments and advice in terms of approving our monitoring of this. In 2022 the City approved a renovation framework for the City of Toronto. As you know, it's a very tricky subject between the City's jurisdiction and the provincial jurisdiction around tenant and landlord relationships. So, we have started that process to ensure that the city has a role in protecting against illegitimate rent evictions and demo evictions. We have a rental replacement policy through our city planning and our official plan. But we are continuing those conversations with the province as well around implementation.

Community Update

United Way Bringing Affordable Housing Home Report – Bahar Shoudpour.

See slide deck / presentation.



Community Update

TSN Pipeline Project – Edward Pereira, Toronto Shelter Network.

See slide deck / presentation.

TAEH Items and Updates

Fall Economic Statement Briefing and City Hall Roundup – Peter Martin, Housing Solutions Manager, TAEH.

The most important thing to come out of this is the massive gap between the plan and the money it's going to cost to make the plan happen. Even if current levels of funding are continued indefinitely, the 2030 goal will not be met until 2054. So, we should stop thinking of plans and think more in terms of just increasing our capacity to build affordable supportive housing as an ongoing part of our culture as a country as opposed to a special project. In terms of the actual statement itself. Unfortunately, there was no announcement made concerning a face for Rapid Housing Initiative funding or the Reaching Home program.

There was a lot of talk about targeted funding from vulnerable groups. In the statement, the only vulnerable group of the list of identified groups that is getting targeted funding are Indigenous communities, which is important because of the historic perspective and situation in terms of Indigenous housing.

The good news is the mean they announced again, the housing accelerator fund. We're getting one eighths of that money. We've done the required alignment of our bylaws to make that money eligible. So that's good news. The Federal the money from the Canada Ontario housing benefit is not increased, it's being decreased. I'll point out that your city ran out to this allocation for 2023 in May and even though the City and the province added the top up in August is clearly not sufficient for the needs of the what the program is intended for.

There was also an announcement about removing the GST on new Co Op rental housing. This may have some effect in other parts of the country, but it's completely irrelevant in Toronto. The cooperative housing Federation of Toronto has its own development cooperation to get around the problem of not getting the benefit of the GST rebate. They've also added the most important change in terms of adding money that came out of this announcement. Was the addition of \$15 billion to what we used to call the rental construction financing initiative. They've now called it it's been renamed the apartment construction loan program. Until 2025 26. So that's going to be added to the remaining \$8 billion in that fund. So, from our perspective, is that this money as the government alluded to intends to build 1000s of new homes for the middle class, as opposed to affordable and deeply affordable housing.

In terms of affordable housing, though, the National Housing Co-Investment Fund has been renamed the Affordable Housing Fund and in honour of the renaming, they are adding a billion dollars over three years which will beginning in fiscal year 2025 26. This will support the construction the additional money will support the construction of 7000 new units across Canada.



The other thing is there going to be increasing the number of federal lands for housing but it's a tiny number of buildings or units that will be built from it. The federal government is the largest landowner in the country, and yet their repurposing of federal housing. Federal lands for housing in this statement will only create 600 new units for a total of four and a half 1000 units built or renovated across Canada, of which only 30% will be affordable so there's room for change there as well.

If you look at the annex to the statement, showing expected changes to the budget as a result of the fall economic statement, it shows a decrease in funding for the housing action plan, a decrease of \$1 billion in 25 to 26, about \$2 billion decrease in both 2627 and 2728. And about \$1.6 billion decrease in the budget for the housing action plan in 28 to 29.

Closing statement

TAEH is transitioning to a new newsletter distribution system. We'll be sending out more of these kinds of round ups, looking at what's been happening at the different orders of governments and some of these analyses starting in the new year. So, if you're not signed up to our newsletter, or aren't receiving them, just shoot me an email and I'll make sure that you get transitioned to that new system.

Our next meeting is January 10.