



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

Information previously distributed / Information distribué auparavant

TO: Community Services Committee and Council

DESTINATAIRE : Comité des services communautaires et Conseil

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Le 12 octobre 2023

FILE NUMBER: ACS2023-CSS-GEN-015

SUBJECT: Response to Motion No. CSC2023-01-05

OBJET : Réaction à la motion n° CSC2023-01-05

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Information Previously Distributed (IPD) Memorandum is to provide a response to Community Services Committee and Council regarding [Motion No. CSC2023-01-05](#), carried on February 28, 2023. This IPD provides Committee and Council with an interim update to the annual Housing Services Progress Report and will provide data for Q1 and Q2 2023, thus keeping Committee and Council up to date on the housing and homelessness emergency and crisis.

As requested in the motion and using an anti-racism and women and gender equity lens, this report includes:

1. The current number of families being housed in hotels and motels
2. The number of families in family shelters
3. The number of single youth, men and women in emergency shelters
4. The cost of hotels
5. The cost of emergency sheltering
6. The number of singles and families who have moved from shelters to permanent housing through rent-geared to income housing or with a housing subsidy.

BACKGROUND

Since 2017, Housing Services has produced a comprehensive annual report for both Council and the public. This report includes an overview of Housing Services' updates and data, including homelessness data. The purpose of this report is to highlight successes, provide an overview of work in progress, and to identify trends in data over multiple years. The report also provides important information and insights that assist with future planning for Housing Services.

In January 2020, Ottawa City Council declared a housing and homelessness emergency and crisis, highlighting the need for more funding from all levels of government for both affordable housing and homelessness services. Almost immediately following this declaration, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began significantly impacting the housing sector, particularly homelessness services.

Recognizing the need to reduce the burden on the emergency shelter system, the City of Ottawa collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to determine how to increase health and safety for people experiencing homelessness in Ottawa. The result was a collaborative effort to open isolation centres to provide medical care and Physical Distancing Centres (PDCs) to provide more space and to limit the spread of COVID-19.

As of September 2023, there are still two PDCs open in Ottawa: Dempsey PDC serving single women and Bernard Grandmaître PDC serving single men. Despite PDCs housing 416 people since January 2021, they remain open as the existing shelter system cannot meet the demand for service. Housing Services continues to work to transition out of these facilities and an update to Council will be provided in Fall 2023.

Prior to the pandemic, the single shelter sector was able to adapt to demand and open additional overflow mats and programming to add to existing capacity. However, these options are no longer viable. These spaces were multi-use and with enhanced health

and safety precautions, these spaces can no longer be converted for overflow capacity. As such, PDCs are still required to ensure there is adequate space for single people experiencing homelessness in Ottawa.

The City of Ottawa's single and family shelter systems were at or near capacity prior to the pandemic. As indicated in the most recent Housing Services Annual Progress Report, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an overall decrease in the number of people accessing services in 2020 and 2021. This decrease was due to many factors including closed provincial and national borders, emergency programs such as Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), and individuals choosing not to access congregate living settings due to safety concerns. While the shelter system has not yet reached pre-COVID levels overall, the numbers are approaching pre-COVID levels.

The City of Ottawa's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030 (the Plan) outlines key actions required to address family homelessness. Currently, the family shelter system continues to rely on overflow hotels, motels, and post-secondary residences to provide adequate capacity for families experiencing homelessness in Ottawa. One of the key steps outlined in the Plan is to conduct an analysis of family shelter needs, including a cost-benefit analysis for a new family shelter. Additionally, the City of Ottawa is exploring opportunities to increase transitional housing capacity for families and options to create faster transitions to permanent housing through changes to policies and/or Local Rules.

There are several factors that are contributing to the increase in service demand for shelter and homelessness services for both families and singles, including:

- Rising average rents that are greater than the set Average Market Rents in provincially-funded housing allowances, making it more challenging for people experiencing homelessness to secure affordable housing.
- Social Assistance (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) rates do not reflect the true and increasing cost of living.
- No new provincial operating funding for homelessness services until 2026.
- No long-term commitments for capital funding from the province or federal governments.
- International, inter-provincial and intercity migration placing additional demands on all components of the housing and homelessness continuum.
- More complex client needs requiring additional mental health, addictions and social service supports to maintain housing.
- A worsening opioid crisis in Canada and Ottawa; in 2022 there were 866 overdose emergency department visits, and from January to June 2023 there have already been 593 visits as reported by Ottawa Public Health.

DISCUSSION

Housing Services utilizes the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to aggregate sector data. HIFIS is a federally owned and managed database and municipalities must use HIFIS or a comparable Homelessness Management Information System as a stipulation of receiving federal Reaching Home funding. The shelter system in Ottawa has used HIFIS since 1997 and since then has continuously worked toward improving data quality. In a recent expansion project, The City of Ottawa added 17 new homelessness and housing service providers to HIFIS and expanded use for another 16 existing providers, which will continue to improve the knowledge and data related to homelessness and housing in the City of Ottawa.

Data Limitations and Details

There are limitations to the data in HIFIS. The database itself is managed at the federal level, meaning that the City of Ottawa cannot unilaterally make changes to the system. Any changes to the functionality of the database requires consensus among municipalities and is subject to review by the federal government. As such, racialized data and detailed immigration status data is not available.

Additionally, homelessness overall is underrepresented in HIFIS because to have a profile in HIFIS, households must have accessed the shelter system in Ottawa. People who are couch-surfing and/or precariously housed are not captured in HIFIS data.

In categories where the total number of households being reported is less than five, the data is not being reported and a dash (—) will be displayed. This is standard practice to ensure anonymity of the households. It should also be noted that the totals in the charts below is not a sum of the remaining categories, as households may belong to more than one sub-category being reported. For example, a single person may identify as female, Indigenous, and a Veteran, and would therefore be included in all of these categories, as well as in the total for that table.

Definitions

Below are the standard definitions utilized by Housing Services when reviewing, compiling, and presenting data, ensuring consistency and data integrity.

Household Compositions

Family Unit	A family unit is comprised of two or more family members
Family Members	Each unique individual that is part of a family unit
Households	Either a family unit or a single individual
Household Members	Each unique individual that is part of a household

Housing Types

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)/Subsidized	Housing that is at a fixed address and where part of the rent is subsidized/paid by government and the remaining rent is paid by the tenant based on a pre-determined formula, with households paying no more than 30 per cent of their income towards rent.
Housing Allowance	A sum of money that is provided to a household to go toward paying rent. Addresses are not fixed, and housing allowances are portable.
Supportive Housing	A type of housing that provides varying levels of onsite supports (e.g., medical, counselling, case management) that help people live independently. Generally geared toward single people, not families.
Private Market	A unit where an individual/family is paying full price.

Families in Family Shelters

The City of Ottawa's family shelter system is comprised of five facilities. Two of these facilities provide service to newcomer families only, while another provides service to young mothers with infant children. The remaining two facilities provide service to any families experiencing homelessness in Ottawa. The table below shows the use of the family shelter system from January to June 2023, providing the average number of family units in the system per night in each month of period.

Unique Family Units in Family Shelters						
Average Nightly Occupancy (January to June 2023)						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Total Families	64	71	77	80	86	90
Newcomer Families	46	49	52	56	60	64
Sole Support Female-led Families	38	44	49	49	53	54
Indigenous Families	—	—	—	—	—	—

The above table shows an increase in the number of families accessing the family shelter system. This increase can be attributed to facilities returning to pre-COVID capacity levels, which was done cautiously and with the support of Ottawa Public Health. The overall capacity and demand for family shelter services remained relatively steady from January to June 2023.

Families in Overflow Hotels, Motels, and Post-Secondary Residences

The City of Ottawa relies on hotels, motels, and post-secondary residences to provide temporary emergency accommodation to families experiencing homelessness when the permanent family shelter system is at capacity. Currently, the City of Ottawa partners with approximately 25 hotel providers across the city to ensure there is adequate capacity for families.

The table below details the average number of families per night in an overflow hotel, motel, or post-secondary residence from January to June 2023. The average number of families at overflow sites decreased during this period. As noted in the previous section, permanent family shelter facilities slowly returned to pre-COVID capacity levels, and when taking into account both tables, the number of families requiring placement has remained relatively consistent between January and June 2023.

Unique Family Units in Overflow Hotels, Motels & Post-Secondary Residences Average Nightly Occupancy (January to June 2023)						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Total Families	300	294	284	276	256	254
Newcomer Families	183	180	174	168	153	150
Sole Support Female-led Families	175	175	169	162	151	155
Indigenous Families	10	9	9	7	5	3

Singles in Single Shelter System

The City of Ottawa’s single shelter system is comprised of seven permanent facilities, and as of the writing of this report there are still two Physical Distancing Centres (PDCs) in operation. The permanent facilities are operated by community agencies, while the PDCs are operated by the City of Ottawa.

The single persons shelter sector provides service to adults and youth experiencing homelessness in Ottawa. Most single individuals accessing the shelter system receive placement at a community shelter; however, in extenuating circumstances, the City of Ottawa may place a single adult at a hotel, motel, or post-secondary residence. The table below details the average number of singles accessing the shelter system, per night, from January to June 2023. The table includes the total number as well as several additional categories that include various additional groups.

From January to June 2023, the overall number of singles accessing the shelter system has increased. The primary driver of this change is the surge in the number of newcomers accessing the system, increasing from an average of 121 to 178

newcomers (or 47%) per night during this period. Housing Services is currently working with newcomer-serving agencies and the existing shelter system to increase services and supports to newcomers in Ottawa. Additionally, Housing Services is in regular communication with the federal and provincial governments to discuss the increase and possible solutions.

Unique Singles in Single Shelter System Average Nightly Occupancy (January to June 2023)						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Total	810	817	837	846	886	884
Men	565	568	574	586	625	618
Women	227	233	247	243	242	248
Other Genders	17	15	15	16	18	17
Youth (18 & under)	56	55	58	56	55	54
Newcomers	121	126	125	137	165	178
Indigenous	64	58	58	58	59	57
Veterans	8	10	13	11	9	11
Staying in Overflow Hotels, Motels, Post-Secondary Residences	38	36	35	36	39	38

Cost of Hotels, Motels, and Post-Secondary Residences

The City of Ottawa partners with approximately 22 hotels, motels, and post-secondary residences. The number of contracts varies seasonally, as some facilities, namely post-secondary residences, are not available year-round. The City of Ottawa also regularly explores options to expand capacity given the consistent and growing demand for placement for families experiencing homelessness.

From January to June 2023, the cost of temporarily housing homeless families in overflow hotels, motels, and post-secondary residences was \$6,195,567. This amount may be subject to minor changes, as providers and/or City staff may need to retroactively adjust billing statements.

Cost of Emergency Sheltering

The City of Ottawa partners with eight community agencies who operate 11 facilities to provide temporary emergency accommodation to singles and families who are experiencing homelessness in the City of Ottawa. These agencies receive a contracted, fixed funding amount to operate these facilities. In addition, the City of Ottawa owns and

operates a family shelter. These facilities constitute the permanent shelter system in Ottawa.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Ottawa has opened and closed various Physical Distancing Centres (PDCs) to reduce capacity in the single shelter system and to ensure client safety. Now, PDCs are filling a capacity gap in the single shelter system and currently there are two Physical Distancing Centres (PDCs) in operation, one serving single adult men and one serving single adult women.

Category	Cost (January to June 2023)
Single Adult Shelter System	\$6,967,539.50
Family Shelter System*	\$3,520,671.00
Youth Shelter System	\$377,053.00
TOTAL	\$10,865,263.50

**Excludes hotel, motel, post-secondary residence costs noted in above section*

The above funding amounts represent the costs associated with City-operated facilities (Carling Family Shelter and the PDCs) as well as the contracts with community agencies who operate the shelter system in Ottawa. In addition to the above outlined operating costs, the single adult shelter system also received \$594,675 from January to June 2023 to fund 15 Shelter-to-Housing Case Manager positions; these workers support clients to find housing. The funding provided to community agencies does not cover full operating costs and agencies supplement their funding with fundraising and funding from other sources (if/when available).

Families Housed from Shelter System

The tables below display the number of families who exited the shelter system and moved into various types of housing, along with the average and median length of stay in each category. There are additional categories also presented including newcomer families, sole support female-led families and Indigenous families.

In all categories, the median length of stay is shorter than the average length, meaning there are some families that are staying for very long periods of time and raising the average length of stay. Length of stay in shelter varies for a number of reasons including but not limited to: the size of the family, document readiness of the family, availability of affordable units (including subsidized units), whether or not the family has a priority on the Centralized Waiting List, and family income.

Families Housed (January to June 2023) Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)/Subsidized Housing			
	Families Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total Families	102	258 days	229 days
Newcomer Families	59	272 days	230 days
Sole Support Female-led Families	67	262 days	210 days
Indigenous Families	5	312 days	205 days

Families Housed (January to June 2023) Housing Allowance			
	Families Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total Families	55	244 days	181 days
Newcomer Families	29	258 days	179 days
Sole Support Female-led Families	36	233 days	181 days
Indigenous Families	—	—	—

Families Housed (January to June 2023) Private Market			
	Families Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total Families	24	202 days	172 days
Newcomer Families	20	197 days	181 days
Sole Support Female-led Families	9	223 days	196 days
Indigenous Families	0	—	—

Singles Housed from Shelter System

The tables below display the number of singles who exited the shelter system and moved into various types of housing, along with the average and median length of stay in each category. There are several additional categories also displayed, further breaking down the data.

The median length of stay is lower than the average length of stay in almost all cases, except for one instance where they are the same. As with families, this is indicative of a small number of individuals who remain in the shelter system for a long time, increasing the overall average.

Singles Housed (January to June 2023) Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)/Subsidized Housing			
	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	70	188 days	120 days
Men	22	256 days	120 days
Women	43	148 days	86 days
Other Genders	5	215 days	214 days
Youth	13	197 days	197 days
Newcomers	23	184 days	139 days
Indigenous	—	—	—
Veterans	—	—	—

Singles Housed (January to June 2023) Housing Allowance			
	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	34	202 days	152 days
Men	18	239 days	152 days
Women	16	158 days	115 days
Other Genders	0	—	—
Youth	—	—	—
Newcomers	14	228 days	126 days
Indigenous	0	—	—
Veterans	0	—	—

Singles Housed (January to June 2023) Supportive Housing			
	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	53	164 days	145 days
Men	23	168 days	145 days
Women	27	98 days	52 days
Other Genders	—	—	—
Youth	—	—	—
Newcomers	20	48 days	30 days
Indigenous	6	193 days	141 days
Veterans	0	—	—

Singles Housed (January to June 2023)			
Private Market			
	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	62	203 days	79 days
Men	42	199 days	79 days
Women	18	213 days	142 days
Other Genders	—	—	—
Youth	10	143 days	173 days
Newcomers	26	130 days	117 days
Indigenous	—	—	—
Veterans	—	—	—

NEXT STEPS

Housing Services will continue to provide timely updates on the above data to Committee and Council. Staff will also explore the possibility of developing an online dashboard with real-time data, which will allow Committee and Council to have the most current information available at any time. Additionally, staff will continue to work with internal and external stakeholders to increase the quality and consistency of the data with the goal of providing the most accurate data for decision-making and policy formulation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- [City of Ottawa's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030](#)
- [Temporary Emergency Accommodations Dashboard](#)
- [2020-2021 Progress Report on the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan](#)
- [2022 Housing and Homelessness Update](#)

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