

**Subject: Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy Update**

**File Number: ACS2024-CSS-GEN-008**

**Report to Community Services Committee on 26 June 2024**

**and Council 10 July 2024**

**Submitted on June 17, 2024 by Clara Freire, General Manager, Community and Social Services**

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**Ward: Citywide**

**Objet : Stratégie intégrée de transition au logement**

**Numéro de dossier : ACS2024-CSS-GEN-008**

**Rapport présenté au Comité des services communautaires**

**Rapport soumis le 26 juin 2024**

**et au Conseil le 10 juillet 2024**

**Soumis le 17 juillet, 2024 par Clara Freire, Directrice générale – Services sociaux et communautaires**

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**Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville**

#### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That the Community Services Committee recommend that Council receive the information outlined in this report.**

#### **RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité des services communautaires recommande au Conseil de prendre**

**connaissance des renseignements contenus dans le présent rapport.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City began operating Physical Distancing-Emergency Overflow Centres (PDC) in May 2020 as a temporary measure to support efforts in reducing the overall density within the single adult community shelter system and provide adequate space for users to physically distance and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. While the PD-EOCs began as a mechanism to reduce density in the community shelters and allow for physical distancing, they are now also addressing a critical capacity gap within the system.

Pressures in Ottawa, as well as in cities across Canada, have continued to grow. This is driven by private market housing constraints with its low vacancy rate and high rents, inflation and increasing cost of living, low Ontario Works and Ontario Disabilities Support Program rates, barriers faced by equity deserving groups in securing housing as well as increasing client complexity and needs.

On April 13, 2022, Council approved the “Respite Services Sustainability Plan” report (ACS2022-CSS-GEN-002) which directed staff to conduct a review of the single adult community shelter requirements and develop a longer-term plan, which resulted in the development of the Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy.

On July 12, 2023, Ottawa City Council approved the [Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy](#) (ITHS). The ITHS is comprised of short, medium and long-term initiatives to support single adult shelter clients to transition to housing, while addressing immediate pressures in the shelter system, and exit the operation of Physical Distancing-Emergency Overflow Centres (PD-EOCs) in City-owned recreational facilities. The Strategy adopted two overarching goals:

1. Everyone who needs and wants access to a shelter bed should be able to access one.
2. Chronic homelessness is eliminated.

There has been significant progress and success in implementing the strategies of the ITHS, including continued support to single adults experiencing homelessness, with outcomes such as:

- **360** PD-EOC clients housed between June 2023 and May 2024;
- **365** spaces added to temporarily increase capacity through Winter 2023-2024;

- **177** new supportive housing units developed or in construction; and
- **423** new shelter and transitional housing beds added or in development.

However, since the adoption of the ITHS, there has been a significant and unprecedented increase in the demand on the single adult shelter system, driven by placement requests by newcomers, primarily migrants and asylum seekers. Specifically:

- 64 per cent of single adult shelter clients are now newcomers, up from 21 per cent in June 2023;
- 55 per cent more clients are being served by the single adult shelter system now than in May 2023; and
- Over 360 people were being supported at three temporary locations (Bernard Grandmaître and Heron Road PD-EOCs and Lanark Temporary Emergency Overnight Centre), as of mid-May.

Staff and community partners have initiated planning for Winter 2024-2025 and will continue to implement the initiatives outlined in the ITHS. In Q4 2024, staff will advise present Council with the specifics of plans for Winter 2024-2025, as well as present a refined strategy for the operation of medium-term facilities which address system pressures and opportunities.

## **RÉSUMÉ**

La Ville a commencé à exploiter des centres de distanciation physique et de débordement d'urgence (CDPDU) en mai 2020 en tant que mesure temporaire pour appuyer les efforts visant à réduire la densité d'occupation de l'ensemble du réseau de refuges pour adultes seuls et offrir aux usagers des locaux adéquats leur permettant de maintenir une distanciation physique et de limiter la propagation de la COVID-19. Même si les CDPDU ont été créés, dans un premier temps, pour réduire la densité d'occupation dans les refuges communautaires et permettre de maintenir la distanciation physique, ils répondent aujourd'hui à des lacunes importantes en matière de capacité au sein du réseau.

Les pressions exercées à Ottawa, comme dans les villes à travers le Canada, ne cessent de croître. Cette situation est due aux contraintes des logements offerts sur le marché privé, avec un faible taux d'inoccupation et des loyers élevés, à l'inflation et à l'augmentation du coût de la vie, aux faibles taux du programme Ontario au travail et du Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées, aux obstacles auxquels

sont confrontés les groupes méritant l'équité pour obtenir un logement, ainsi qu'à la complexité et aux besoins croissants de la clientèle.

Le 13 avril 2022, le Conseil a approuvé le rapport « Plan de viabilité des services de répit » (ACS2022-CSS-GEN-002) qui demandait au personnel de procéder à un examen des besoins du réseau des refuges communautaires pour adultes seuls et d'élaborer un plan à plus long terme, ce qui a donné lieu à l'élaboration de la Stratégie intégrée de transition au logement.

Le 12 juillet 2023, le Conseil municipal d'Ottawa a approuvé la [Stratégie intégrée de transition au logement](#) (SITL). La SITL comprend des initiatives à court, moyen et long terme visant à aider les clients des refuges pour adultes seuls à faire la transition vers un logement, tout en répondant aux pressions immédiates dans le réseau des refuges, et à mettre fin à l'exploitation des centres de distanciation physique et de débordement d'urgence (CDPDU) dans les installations récréatives appartenant à la Ville. Les deux objectifs généraux de la stratégie sont les suivants :

1. Un lit en refuge devrait être disponible pour toute personne qui en exprime le besoin.
2. Éliminer l'itinérance chronique.

La mise en œuvre des stratégies de la SITL a connu des avancées et des réalisations significatives, y compris un soutien continu aux adultes seuls en situation d'itinérance, comme en témoignent les résultats suivants :

- **360** clients des CDPDU ont été logés entre les mois de juin 2023 et mai 2024;
- **365** places ont été ajoutées pour augmenter temporairement la capacité d'occupation jusqu'à l'hiver 2023-2024;
- **177** nouveaux logements avec services de soutien ont été conçus ou sont en cours de construction;
- **423** nouveaux lits en refuge et en logement de transition ont été ajoutés ou sont en cours de réalisation.

Cependant, depuis l'adoption de la SITL, on a observé une augmentation significative et sans précédent de la demande au sein du réseau de refuges pour adultes seuls, en raison des demandes de placement des nouveaux arrivants, principalement des migrants et des demandeurs d'asile. Plus précisément :

- 64 pour cent des clients des refuges pour adultes seuls sont de nouveaux arrivants, contre 21 pour cent en juin 2023;
- 55 pour cent de plus de clients sont desservis par le réseau de refuges pour adultes seuls en ce moment par rapport à mai 2023;
- À la mi-mai, plus de 360 personnes étaient prises en charge dans trois centres temporaires (les CDPDU Bernard Grandmaître et du chemin Heron ainsi que le centre temporaire d'hébergement d'urgence pour la nuit de l'avenue Lanark).

Les membres du personnel et les partenaires communautaires ont commencé à planifier l'hiver 2024-2025 et continueront à mettre en œuvre les initiatives décrites dans la SITL. Au quatrième trimestre 2024, les membres du personnel informeront le Conseil des détails des plans pour l'hiver 2024-2025, et présenteront une stratégie affinée pour l'exploitation des installations à moyen terme qui répondent aux pressions et aux possibilités du réseau.

## **BACKGROUND**

On July 12, 2023 Ottawa City Council approved the [Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy](#) (ITHS). The ITHS is comprised of short, medium and long-term initiatives to support single adult shelter clients to transition to housing, while addressing immediate pressures in the shelter system, and exit the operation of Physical Distancing-Emergency Overflow Centres (PD-EOCs) in City-owned recreational facilities. The ITHS adopted two overarching goals:

1. Everyone who needs and wants access to a shelter bed should be able to access one.
2. Chronic homelessness is eliminated.

At the time of the inception of ITHS Strategy, there were two PD-EOCs operating at the Dempsey Community Centre and the Bernard Grandmaître Arena supporting a total of 114 people.

Through the summer of 2023, demand on the single adult shelter system grew at an unprecedented rate, and by Fall 2023, all community shelters, existing PD-EOCs and overflow mechanisms were full, with a growing level of unmet demand.

On October 26, 2023, Mayor Sutcliffe and Councillor Dudas, Chair of Community Services Committee, convened an Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce to expedite

short-term solutions and actions required to address the current crisis facing Ottawa's emergency shelter system.

On November 1, 2023, Community and Social Services issued a memo to Council, "[Extension and Expansion of Physical Distancing Centres](#)". The memo confirmed the opening of a third City operated PD-EOC at Heron Road Community Centre as well as the continued operation of the Dempsey PD-EOC and the Bernard Grandmaître PD-EOC for the foreseeable future.

As part of the work of the Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce, [Council passed four motions on November 22, 2023](#) directing staff to:

- **Item 19.3:** Actively advance the option of a Sprung Structure(s), or other semi-permanent facility option;
- **Item 19.4:** Work with newcomer-serving agencies and networks to identify supports and alternative placement options, and continue to request funding to fund those options from other levels of government who have jurisdiction over the provision of immigrant, refugee and other migrant settlement services;
- **Item 19.5:** First increase capacity at the existing PD-EOCs, to the extent that ensures safety for clients and staff, through the addition of bunk beds if additional system capacity is required; and
- **Item 19.6:** Pursue overnight warming spaces and other related winter services for those who are living unsheltered or at risk of homelessness, and plan for increasing capacity in the system prior to winter 2024/25.

Staff committed to updating Council in Q2 2024 about the implementation of the ITHS and the further refinement of medium to long-term initiatives, which is the basis for this report. Updates on the Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce motions are also included below.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since the Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy (ITHS) was adopted in July 2023, the context and pressures in the single adult shelter system has shifted significantly due to an unprecedented influx of newcomers. As outlined below, progress has been made towards all the short- medium- and long-term strategies.

In summary:

- **360** PD-EOC clients housed between June 2023 and May 2024;
- Added **365** spaces to temporarily increase capacity in Winter 2023-2024;
- **177** new supportive housing units developed or in construction; and
- **423** new shelter and transitional housing beds added or in development.

### **Current Context**

As of mid-May, 2024, there were three temporary sites in operation, supporting over 360 clients:

- Bernard Grandmaître and Heron PD-EOCs providing 24/7 service to clients; and
- Lanark Temporary Emergency Overnight Centre provides a safe overnight space for those who otherwise would not have any other place to shelter during the evening and overnight hours.

These temporary beds represent 37 per cent of the total shelter system beds in use. The single adult shelter system is supporting 55 per cent more clients than in May 2023, and 78 per cent more clients than pre-pandemic.

The arrival of newcomers, primarily migrants and asylum seekers, continues to be a primary driver of demand with the single adult shelter system wide make-up at present being:

- 64 per cent newcomer clients
- 36 per cent non-newcomer clients

This is a significant shift from when the ITHS was adopted, when newcomer clients constituted only 17 per cent of clients being served.

In Ottawa, 5 per cent of the population identifies as Indigenous. The 2021 Point-in-Time count indicated that 32 per cent of people experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous. While the single adult shelter system landscape has shifted significantly since 2021, the Indigenous population remains overrepresented and unique in their experiences of homelessness due to the interconnectivity of colonization, residential school abuse, intergenerational trauma of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and structural policies and practices. The pending Indigenous Housing and Homelessness

Plan, and 2024 Point-in-Time count will provide a better understanding of Indigenous homelessness in Ottawa and potential solutions developed by Indigenous community leaders.

In addition to clients being served in shelter, the City and partners continue to support a significant and growing unsheltered population. As of mid-May, there are an estimated 260 people living unsheltered. The City utilizes the expertise of the Unsheltered Task Force, a coordinated response to encampments which focuses on taking a supportive, housing focused approach to relocation. Outreach Services engage with people in encampments to work with them on their housing goals. As part of this engagement, they will also encourage individuals to access available shelter space and provide transportation to anyone willing to come inside. As encampments are identified to the City through the community and partners, Outreach Services are notified so they can begin that supportive engagement with a focus on securing long-term housing. Between June 2023 and May 2024, there were 358 resolved encampments.

### **Initiative Updates**

The ITHS outlined the following as key initiatives:

- Short Term (1 year):
  - Coordinated Rapid Rehousing Initiative including a new Enhanced Housing Allowance for Singles Prototype
  - Winter Response Strategy including an overflow facility
- Medium Term (1 to 5 years)
  - Continued development of supportive housing
  - Systems Change to Support Housing Objectives including adding additional capacity to the shelter system in the form of new facilities
- Long Term (5+ years)
  - Development of a Supportive Housing Community Hub

Short-term initiatives have been successfully delivered, and there has been positive progress with many medium-term strategies that focus on transitions to permanent housing, while stabilizing the shelter system. Further details on these initiatives are



available below, including initiatives that have been completed and those that are in progress.

### **Completed Initiatives**

As part of the coordinated Rapid Rehousing Initiative:

- 161 PD-EOC clients were housed with an Enhanced Housing Allowance Benefit (EHAB), through the Rapid Rehousing Prototype, exceeding the initiative target by 34 per cent. The EHAB is financial support provided towards rent, offered at a higher rate than standard programs to align with the higher market rents. Evaluations are currently underway and will inform future recommendations for the initiative.
- 199 additional PD-EOC clients were housed including 44 clients that moved to supportive or transitional housing.
- Onsite supports were enhanced at PD-EOCs including:
  - Providing onsite support targeting newcomer clients with settlement services, need assessments to determine eligibility for transitional housing as well as various supports to help in their settlement journey (Motion 19.4).
  - Increased the number of housing support case workers to coordinate access to resources and services.

Under the Winter Response Strategy, staff, community partners and the Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce:

- Opened the Heron PD-EOC in November 2023 to ultimately provide 232 additional beds for clients.
- Maximized the available capacity in the existing PD-EOCs at Dempsey and Bernard Grandmaître by adding bunkbeds and overflow spaces to open 73 more spaces (Motion 19.5).
- Petitioned the Federal government for:
  - In-kind support leading to an initial lease and extension of 250 Lanark Ave as a Temporary Emergency Overnight Centre to serve up to 60 clients per night (Motion 19.6).

- A permanent newcomer reception centre to reduce the pressure on the community shelter system and provide targeted services and supports.
- Expanded Day Program operations at Centre 507 to include 24/7 low barrier overnight warming and respite services including option with access to basic amenities, including warm space, snacks, hygiene facilities, and social services (Motion 19.6).

New Supportive Housing included:

- Opened 29 supportive housing units for women in January 2024 at the John Howard Society's Lisgar Street location providing long-term housing with supports.
- Opened 46 supportive housing units for women in April 2024 at Cornerstone's Eccles Street location to provide long-term housing with supports.

The Transitional Housing system was enhanced as follows:

- Secured and operationalized 1 Corkstown road was secured and operationalized to ultimately increase the permanent family transitional housing system capacity, creating additional flexibility within the broader system which enabled:
  - Cornerstone Emergency Shelter for Women to permanently move to the former Carling Family Shelter location in May 2024. Their previous facility was at the end of its lifecycle, and the new location allowed for an expansion of their services to accommodate 150 permanent and 15 overflow beds.
- Added one hundred and sixty-four (164) beds for clients as a result of Matthew House and Stepstone House opening a total of 17 more houses since June 2023. This was facilitated by to increase the capacity of these agencies that operate Newcomer reception and transitional homes, a proven effective model in diverting clients from the traditional shelter system, and supporting them to transition to long-term housing (Motion 19.4). Coordinated advocacy between community partners, the Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce and staff resulted in:
- Submission of a reimbursement request to the Federal Government under the Interim Housing Assistance Program and received \$27.7M to offset costs of providing shelter to newcomer clients in 2023.

- The Government of Ontario announcing a new agreement in March 2024 which includes \$120 million over 3 years, from 2023 to 2026, of new funding for shelter services.

### **Initiatives In Progress**

Staff and community partners continue to work towards realizing additional supportive and transitional housing capacity, including 102 supportive housing units under construction and an additional 83 units in the pre-development stage. Further initiatives are detailed below.

An office to transitional housing conversion is underway at 230 Queen Street to support up to 130 single adults, mainly newcomers. Council approved staff entering a lease for the location in March 2024. Construction will be required to fit-up the space. The City is working with community partners to define an operating model for the space, which will be reflected in a Request for Proposals for a community partner to operate the space. This initiative may be considered as part of the Reception Centre Proposal submitted to Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, see further details below.

Three City-owned land parcels have been shortlisted for potential Newcomer Reception Centres, through the installation of Sprung Structures, which may also be used for overflow or to address other systems pressures related to newcomers over time. Staff are currently working cross-departmentally, and with the relevant Ward Councillors, to assess feasibility of each parcel. At the same time, staff are exploring various leasing and purchasing options that could be implemented alongside or in place of these facilities (Motion 19.3).

City and community partners are working together to leverage existing City and shelter system assets to add an additional 25 beds in newcomer reception and transitional homes. The City's Newcomer Reception Centre proposal to Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), as described below, includes additional funding to further expand the model to support another 120 clients.

In September 2023, Council approved the purchase of 1245 Kilborn Place, which is an 8.7-acre parcel of land with an existing 3-storey residential and office building. The site will be developed into a Supportive Housing Community Hub, as a long-term initiative of the ITHS. Before the purchase's closure, building condition audits and environmental assessments were conducted on the property. A comprehensive, multi-tiered project plan is being developed, which will include sector and community consultation initially to

inform the vision for the site. The Strategic Initiatives Department will co-lead this initiative with Community and Social Services.

To support much of the above, the City submitted a funding proposal to IRCC for funding to open a newcomer Reception Centre in Ottawa with an anticipated 320 bed capacity over the next 2 years. The model will provide targeted services to asylum seekers, including those currently accessing traditional shelter services with the goal of ensuring sustainable settlement and integration into the community, and restore capacity within the community shelter system. Discussions are ongoing.

### **Next Steps**

Planning has been initiated for winter 2024-2025 that will leverage the progress made over the last year including the addition of permanent capacity in the broader shelter system, supports to the newcomer sector to grow, and the piloting of new models of service delivery.

Housing and Homelessness Services continues to work collaboratively with the Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce, various City departments and community partners to implement the initiatives outlined in the ITHS. Staff are actively exploring acquisition opportunities to create additional permanent Transitional Housing capacity as well as the 230 Queen Street Transitional Housing Program, and the development of Sprung Structures initiatives as outlined above as part of the medium-long term initiatives.

In Q4 2024, staff will inform Council on the specifics of plans for Winter 2024-2025, as well as present a refined strategy for the operation of medium-term facilities, which addresses system pressures and opportunities.

Funding strategies for the initiatives outlined in the ITHS for 2024 and onwards will be considered in the updated Housing & Homelessness Long Range Financial Plan (LRFP) to be brought forward to Council in Q3 2024.

Additional initiatives and strategies that will continue to address housing and homelessness pressures across the system will be further outlined in the updated 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, expected to be brought forward to Council in 2025. Initial work is currently being completed that will inform the development of the Plan. This includes a housing needs assessment, as well as planning for the federally mandated 2024 Point-in-Time count, which is a community-level measure of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness completed over a 24-hour period.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Funding requirements to implement the Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy beyond 2024 will be considered as part of the updated Housing & Homelessness Services Long Range Financial Plan (LRFP) to be presented to Council for approval in Q3 2024 and as part of the 2025 City Budget process.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to receiving the report for information purposes.

## **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

This is a city-wide report.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

No Advisory Committees were consulted in the development of this report.

## **CONSULTATION**

Building on the consultation process that was done to develop the recommendations of the ITHS, staff continues to work closely with the single adult shelter partners, housing and homelessness sector partners through the Alliance to End Homelessness, and the Homelessness Community Advisory Board, as well as the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition.

City staff continue to work side by side with sector partners in the implementation of each different housing initiative, including rapid rehousing, opening of transitional homes, increasing bed capacity and providing single shelter partner updates.

Further input will be solicited from the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT). This table is made up of 19 interim members from across the sector who developed the table's terms of reference, mission, vision and mandate. A comprehensive recruitment strategy is currently in process to secure the long-term membership for this table.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

All initiatives arising from the Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy report, if approved, would be implemented according to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 191/11 (IASR) of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA) in addition to following the requirements of the City's Accessibility Design Standards (ADS), where applicable.

The programs and facilities developed and provided as part of the Strategy outlined in this report will align to the commitment of the City of Ottawa's [Accessibility Policy](#) and ensure equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of City services, programs, goods, facilities and information.

### **ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The implementation of the Comprehensive Asset Management program enables the City to effectively manage existing and new infrastructure to maximize benefits, reduce risk, and provide safe and reliable levels of service to community users. This is done in a socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically conscious manner. Any asset management implications related to leases and properties will be addressed in future Committee and Council reports.

### **CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no climate implications of the recommendations in this report.

### **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS**

Provided the approval of the prioritized objectives as outlined in this report, the ITHS will continue to be implemented through existing delegated authority.

### **ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

There are no economic implications of the recommendations in this report.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications of the recommendations in this report

### **INDIGENOUS, GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

The 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan highlights specific population needs, further compounded in intersectional identities. Further implementation would also continue to consider the Women and Gender, and Indigenous Policy Considerations as outlined under the ITHS.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are risk implications, which have been identified and explained in this report and are being managed by the appropriate staff.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technology implications of the recommendations in this report

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

Community and Social Services remains committed to the strategic priority "A city that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all". The work in this report strives to promote and address safety, social and physical well-being for single adults at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

## **DISPOSITION**

Housing & Homelessness Services will engage cross-departmentally, and with community partners to coordinate the implementation of the strategy recommended in this report.

As a follow up to this report:

- Housing & Homelessness Services will work with Finance Services to update the Housing Long Range Financial Plan, which will consider capital and operating funds required for the continued implementation of the ITHS;
- The Strategic Initiatives Department will bring forward any report(s) to the Finance and Corporate Services Committee regarding any long-term leases or property purchases.