



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

Information previously distributed / Information distribué auparavant

TO: Community Services Committee and Council

DESTINATAIRE : Comité des services communautaires et Conseil

FROM: Clara Freire, General Manager,
Community and Social Services

Contact:

Kale Brown, Manager of Homelessness
Programs and Shelter, Community and
Social Services
613-580-2424 ext. 33014
kale.brown@ottawa.ca

EXPÉDITEUR : Clara Freire,
Directrice générale, Services sociaux et
communautaires

Personne ressource :
Kale Brown, Gestionnaire, Service
sociaux et communautaires

DATE: March 13, 2025

13 mars 2025

FILE NUMBER: ACS2025-CSS-GEN-005

SUBJECT: Response to Motion No. CSC2023-01-05 – Update for Q1 & Q2 2024

OBJET : Réaction à la motion n° CSC2023-01-05 – Compte rendu pour le premier et le deuxième trimestres de 2024

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 & Homelessness Services Progress Report and will provide data for Q1 & Q2 2024, 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 & Homelessness Services has produced a comprehensive annual report for both Council and the public. This report includes an overview of Housing & Homelessness 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 & Homelessness 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 – Emergency Overflow Centres (PD-EOCs) to provide more space and to limit the spread of COVID-19.

On January 16, 2025, the [Winter 2024-2025 Plan to Support Residents Experiencing Homelessness](#) memo was issued to Council. This memo provided an update on supports available through the Winter 2024-2025 and beyond, including the addition of over 400 new permanent transitional housing beds to serve single adults (primarily newcomers) between Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. This increased capacity will support plans to transition clients from the PD-EOCs operating in municipal community centres/arenas and free up spaces in community emergency shelters. As a result, the Heron Road PD-EOC will close once all clients have transitioned to the new transitional housing facilities by Spring 2025. The use of the Bernard Grandmaître Arena will remain through the winter and until other overflow capacity is secured.

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. Housing and Homelessness Services continues to explore permanent locations for families, and in February 2024 opened Corkstown Transitional Housing Program for Families, which has increased the permanent capacity for families experiencing homelessness.

DISCUSSION

Housing & Homelessness 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 recent years, the City of Ottawa has expanded the use of HIFIS to include a wider spectrum of homelessness and housing service providers. There are currently approximately 40 service providers in Ottawa using HIFIS and a further expansion is underway to onboard new agencies by April 2025. These expansions 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 interacted with an agency that uses HIFIS. While HIFIS does include both shelter system data and unsheltered data, it does not include data of those who are couch-surfing and/or precariously housed.

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 & Homelessness Services when reviewing, compiling, and presenting data, ensuring consistency and data integrity.

Household Compositions

Term	Definition
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
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 four facilities. Two of these facilities provide service to newcomer families only, while the other two provide service to any families experiencing homelessness in Ottawa. There were previously five facilities in the family system; however, the facility that provided service to young mothers and their babies closed in early 2024. The tables below show the use of the family shelter system from January to June 2024, providing the average number of family units in the system per night in each month of the period.

Unique Family Units in Family Shelters Average Nightly Occupancy (January to June 2024)						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Total Families	94	85	81	90	94	88
Newcomer Families	72	68	67	68	73	70
Sole Support Female-led Families	53	49	48	54	55	49
Indigenous Families	—	—	—	—	—	—

The above table shows the number of families accessing the family shelter system in the period has remained relatively stable. Additionally, the City-owned Carling Family Shelter has moved operations to Corkstown Transitional Housing Program, which will have a larger capacity than its previous facility once fully operational.

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 tables below detail the average number of families per night in an overflow hotel, motel, or post-secondary residence from January to June 2024. The average number of families at overflow sites increased month-over-month during this period, which is typically the case moving from winter months into the summer.

Unique Family Units in Overflow Hotels, Motels & Post-Secondary Residences Average Nightly Occupancy (January to June 2024)						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Total Families	313	326	347	338	346	359
Newcomer Families	220	232	246	244	248	255
Sole Support Female-led Families	206	217	229	213	213	221
Indigenous Families	9	12	13	9	9	8

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 – Emergency Overflow Centres (PD-EOCs) in operation. The permanent facilities are operated by community agencies, while the PD-EOCs 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 tables below detail the average number of singles accessing the shelter system, per night, from January to June 2024. The table includes the total number as well as several additional categories that include various additional groups.

From January to June 2024, the overall number of singles accessing the shelter system remained relatively steady. In 2023, there had been an unprecedented surge in newcomer singles, this influx has reduced in 2024. Housing & Homelessness Services continues to work with newcomer agencies to add capacity and supports for newcomers in the system. Housing & Homelessness Services continues regular communication with the federal and provincial governments to discuss the current state and possible solutions.

Unique Singles in Single Shelter System Average Nightly Occupancy (January to June 2024)						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Total	1235	1258	1256	1263	1266	1281
Men	852	863	868	875	869	863
Women	370	383	373	377	387	408
Other Genders	12	11	13	10	8	9
Youth (18 & under)	52	54	53	54	58	59
Newcomers	630	670	673	689	716	734
Indigenous	69	63	62	61	60	60
Veterans	6	7	9	8	9	10
Staying in Overflow Hotels, Motels, Post-Secondary Residences	31	34	39	45	55	54

Cost of Hotels, Motels, and Post-Secondary Residences

The City of Ottawa partners with approximately 25 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 2024, the cost of temporarily housing homeless families in overflow hotels, motels, and post-secondary residences was \$10,481,743. This amount may be subject to changes, as providers and/or City staff may need to retroactively adjust billing statements.

Cost of Emergency Sheltering

The City of Ottawa partners with seven community agencies who operate 10 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 – Emergency Overflow Centres (PD-EOCs) to reduce capacity in the single shelter system and to ensure client safety. Now, PD-EOCs are filling a capacity gap in the single shelter system and currently there are two PD-EOCs in operation.

Category	Jan-June 2024 Total Costs
Single Adult Shelter System	\$17,158,770
Family Shelter System*	\$5,448,801
Youth Shelter System	\$1,051,263
TOTAL	\$23,658,834

**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 PD-EOCs) 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 \$748,913 from January to June 2024 to fund 18 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 2024) Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)/Subsidized Housing			
	Families Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total Families	92	297 days	219 days
Newcomer Families	65	299 days	199 days
Sole Support Female-led Families	58	239 days	186 days
Indigenous Families	—	—	—

Families Housed (January to June 2024) Housing Allowance			
	Families Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total Families	108	190 days	142 days
Newcomer Families	76	190 days	146 days
Sole Support Female-led Families	73	200 days	160 days
Indigenous Families	—	—	—

Families Housed (January to June 2024)			
Private Market			
	Families Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total Families	16	121 days	69 days
Newcomer Families	15	138 days	74 days
Sole Support Female-led Families	7	73 days	57 days
Indigenous Families	—	—	—

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. 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 2024)
Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)/Subsidized Housing

	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	90	164 days	97 days
Men	36	162 days	136 days
Women	54	164 days	82 days
Other Genders	—	—	—
Youth	11	185 days	134 days
Newcomers	59	159 days	105 days
Indigenous	—	—	—
Veterans	—	—	—

**Singles Housed (January to June 2024)
Housing Allowance**

	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	184	93 days	88 days
Men	104	107 days	101 days
Women	79	74 days	66 days
Other Genders	—	—	—
Youth	—	—	—
Newcomers	170	92 days	83 days
Indigenous	—	—	—
Veterans	—	—	—

Singles Housed (January to June 2024)
Supportive Housing

	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	91	114 days	48 days
Men	41	107 days	57 days
Women	46	122 days	40 days
Other Genders	—	—	—
Youth	15	99 days	60 days
Newcomers	29	109 days	60 days
Indigenous	8	38 days	40 days
Veterans	—	—	—

Singles Housed (January to June 2024)			
Private Market			
	Singles Housed	Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
Total	52	157 days	104 days
Men	31	132 days	115 days
Women	20	198 days	98 days
Other Genders	—	—	—
Youth	—	—	—
Newcomers	32	174 days	116 days
Indigenous	—	—	—
Veterans	—	—	—

NEXT STEPS

Housing & Homelessness Services will continue to provide 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.

Clara Freire

General Manager / Directrice générale

Community and Social Services / Services sociaux et communautaires City of Ottawa/
Ville d'Ottawa

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](#)
- [Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy Update](#)
- [Winter 2024-2025 Plan to Support Residents Experiencing Homelessness](#)