

To: Homes First Society Board of Directors
From: Patricia Mueller, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: HFS Chief Executive Officer's Responsive Programming Update
Date: April 20, 2021

Recommendation:

That this report be received for information.

Background:

This report is an update of reports provided in previous years; however, due to the urgent nature of the emerging Covid crises last year, this report was not presented to the Board in 2020.

Covid has had a significant impact on Homes First in many areas. Some health care providers and harm reduction locations closed, and some treatment centers did not take any new referrals, as a result, fewer clients were able to go into treatment.

Although Homes First saw significant growth in 2020 due to the opening and operation of Hotel Programs, our existing Shelters' capacities were reduced to ensure physical distancing, and Savards was temporarily closed in April as the built form limited occupancy.

The residents of Savards were transferred to other programs, including the Strathcona Hotel Program. In July, we opened the Delta Hotel program, which has a capacity of 275 beds and approximately 300 residents.

In November 2020, we opened the Better Living Centre Winter Respite which has 125 beds, and also has a separate space for a 50-bed Warming Centre in the same building that is activated in the event of an Extreme Cold Weather Alert.

In 2020, we overcame a number of Covid outbreaks (Toronto Public Health defines an outbreak as two cases). Very early in the year, we suffered a major outbreak at Willowdale, when 170 residents and 21 staff tested positive, however, we were very fortunate in that there were no deaths.

Group activities were initially suspended, however, utilizing technology and by ensuring safe distancing and barriers, we were able to create some opportunities for our residents to have social activities, such as with yoga classes at the shelters, and virtual bingo in our housing sites.

Comments:

There are some key program metrics that are shared with the Board as part of my regular Chief Executive Officer's update. In 2010, the Board of Directors engaged a consultant to establish the key measures required by the Board for their oversight of the organization. The HFS Management Team uses additional measures to evaluate our programming to ensure we are enhancing the quality of life and the stability of our residents.

For the purposes of this report, the focus is on client services and not services provided by the Property Department as a separate report.

As noted to the Board in the past reports, program metrics are based on the City of Toronto’s key performance indicators. Staff continue to find the collection of the demographic information sometimes derails the engagement process, particularly around topics such as the clients’ history with the justice system, HIV, as well as mental health and sexual orientation. Legally, we can only ask the client to self-identify, and as a result, we do not believe our demographic information is as accurate as it could be as many of our clients will not self-disclose out of fear or stigma.

The analysis of programs is based on both quantitative and qualitative information. The management team’s experience has shown that there is a risk when we strive to measure and translate our services into metrics, that it can drive us away from the people-service aspect of our services.

HOUSING PROGRAM:

The supportive housing program is designed to support the hardest to house – those individuals with the fewest housing options.

This program is funded with the main objective of homelessness prevention. Homes First provides a case management process to support our clients maintain housing, as well as to set and reach goals that will improve their quality of life on *their* terms.

There are residents who declare they are unwilling to participate in case management, therefore the goal given to those residents is eviction prevention, as well as the expansion of client engagement in self-goal setting.

There are also residents whose needs are so vast and complex, that we must bring in other expertise. Part of the housing workers’ role in these situations, is to act as a broker to support clients in accessing these services. The types of services for which we provide referrals include addictions, as well as medical and psychiatric needs.

Housing Program Performance Indicators:

Households Provided Stabilization Services at Risk of Eviction	Evictions Avoided	Households – Diverted from Homelessness	% of at Risk Households Maintaining Housing With Supports	# of Ongoing Supports	# of Referrals	# of Eviction Prevention Services	# of Activities/ Participants	# of Evictions
2014:								
103	102	242	81%	181	404	102	370/2849	1
2015:								
109	108	262	87%	2465	532	108	555/4037	1
2016:								

138	135	266	82%	2504	617	135	780/5419	3
2017:								
144	142	266	84.5%	2705	804	144	382/4178	2
2018:								
256	136	298	90%	3096	328	137	470/3389	1
2019:								
270	138	266	85%	2,880	362	138	528/3,658	2
2020:								
274	240	254	93%	3,360	416	276	280/3,528	0

HOSPITAL TO HOMES PROGRAM:

Homes First’s Hospital to Homes Program is designed to support residents formerly hospitalized for Schizophrenia by CAMH, to transition into permanent housing. This program included the hiring of Personal Support Workers, as well as the contracted services of a Registered Practical Nurse.

Much of the initial programming is in support of residents learning (or relearning) basic life skills of managing an apartment such as buying groceries, budgeting, meal planning, and cleaning. In addition, staff supported the clients’ integration within the building, as well as within the local neighbourhood.

At the end of 2020, there were 33 residents in this program.

Hospital to Homes Performance Indicators (2014-2020):

Households Provided Stabilization Services at Risk of Eviction	Evictions Avoided	Households – Diverted from Homelessness	% of at Risk Households Maintaining Housing With Supports	# of Ongoing Supports	# of Referrals	# of Eviction Prevention Services	# of Activities/ Participants	# of Evictions
3	33	33	100%	*	*	33	12/125	0

**Supports included in Housing Program Performance Indicators.*

There continues to be a much higher community integration of the residents of Meegwetch as opposed to the residents of Shuter. At Meegwetch, of the fifteen previously extremely socially isolated residents, twelve are now active in participating in the programs and activities offered at the site. Two residents utilize the Personal Support Workers for meal planning and shopping, and thirteen are working with the Personal Support Workers for the upkeep of their unit.

It is our evaluation that this is an excellent program that supports clients in their recovery and quest to improve their quality of life.

SHELTER PROGRAM:

The Kennedy, Savards, and St. Clair Shelters are considered emergency shelters; Strachan House is a hybrid of housing and shelter. All of the shelter measurements are conducted at Strachan; in addition, a number of housing measurements are used to evaluate Strachan as well.

Shelter Program Performance Indicators:

	# of Unique Individuals Admitted	# of Clients With Completed Needs Assessment	Average Length of Stay in Shelter (Days)	% of Individuals with Housing Plan in Place	# of Long-term Clients in Shelter System
Savards and St. Clair Shelter					
2014:	721	50%	39	40%	42
2015:	560	55%	63	67%	45
2016:	671	52%	50	55%	45
2017:	636	53%	102	57%	81
2018:	982	54%	43	59%	137
2019:	891	55%	66	61%	111
2020:	369	60%	63	67%	89
Kennedy Shelter					
2017:	549	60%	30	60%	219
2018:	496	58%	66	66%	111
2019:	571	63%	61	70%	121
2020:	399	67%	60	70%	101
Strachan House Shelter Clients*					
2014:	101	100%	14*	100%	0
2015:	106	100%	14*	100%	0
2016:	135	100%	14*	100%	0
2017:	144	100%	14*	100%	0
2018:	113	100%	14*	100%	0
2019:	121	100%	14*	100%	0
2020:	111	100%	14*	100%	0
Bathurst-Lake Shore**					
2019:	1355	58%	73	55%	589
2020:	1098	62%	87	62%	501

*Strachan House Shelter clients are either moved on to alternate shelters or housing or become tenants after 14 days.

***In April of 2019, we opened the Bathurst-Lake Shore Shelter, a program for both men and women. At that time, the building was shared with another organization operating a Winter Respite; when that organization relocated in May 2019, a second program for couples was opened. In November 2019, the City asked that Homes First add 50 beds to the basement for men. This shelter serves a heavily “street-involved” population and as such harm reduction and supporting clients with mental health needs are a particular focus of the program. Many clients have been long-term homeless. As part of the City’s enhanced shelter service model this shelter has two teams of Intensive Case Management Workers to help residents with income supports, life skills, housing searches, etc. Primary health care is provided through once-a-week visits from an Inner City Health Associates physician.*

Please note that due to COVID all of our “congregate” or dorm-style shelters reduced capacity significantly due the need for social distancing. This is reflected in the provided numbers.

The Kennedy Shelter serves an aging female population, the majority of which have deteriorating health and mobility. As a result, securing housing with the appropriate supports is very challenging. The Kennedy Shelter was chosen by the City of Toronto as one of five Shelters to pilot a new shelter service model that provides increased resources to hire staff with a focus on assessment, securing housing, programs, and community engagement. A partnership with Inner City Health Association provides primary health care with physicians on-site, once a week.

All of Homes First shelter programs are excellent in dealing with clients considered by many to be the most complex of the shelter clients in the city.

RESPITE, WARMING CENTRES, AND HOTEL PROGRAMS:

Bathurst-Lake Shore Shelter:

As we worked to close two successful respite programs, we were again approached by the City of Toronto about opening a new shelter to support the populations being served at the George Street and QE respites. In April 2019, we opened the Bathurst-Lake Shore Shelter, serving 50 couples and 100 single adults across two floors. Some of the first residents at Bathurst-Lake Shore Shelter were residents of the respite programs.

In the winter of 2019, the basement was turned into an emergency shelter program for men, with an eventual capacity of 75. Subsequently, this program became a permanent part of the shelter, bringing the total number of clients served, including 10 spaces available during Cold Weather Alerts, to 285. However, this shelter’s capacity was cut significantly during the pandemic; bed counts varied but the average number in the latter half of 2020 was approximately 180.

Willowdale Welcome Centre:

In the Fall of 2019, the City approached Homes First to open a Winter response program once again, but this time one with a focus on refugees. The goal was to concentrate services into a program designed around the particular needs of refugees, which would also create additional space in the City’s shelter system for non-refugees, many of which are clients dealing with issues of income instability, addictions, mental illness, etc.

Within three weeks, Homes First had transformed the 85,000 square-foot building (which had been vacant for some time) into a 200-bed shelter, the Willowdale Welcome Centre.

The Willowdale Welcome Centre opened its doors in mid-November 2019 with a team of workers assisting in finding housing, establishing incomes, and navigating the refugee system, along with support from settlement organizations such as Red Cross First Contact. Primary health care provided through once-a-week visits from an Inner City Health Associates physician.

In 2020, the number of intakes declined as Canada stopped receiving new refugees. In early October, the remaining 62 clients were relocated to various locations, and Willowdale was opened 125 bed to shelter clients.

In addition, Willowdale has a separate 50-bed Warming Centre; these beds are activated in the event of an Extreme Cold Weather Alert.

Better Living Centre Winter Respite:

On November 3, 2020, Homes First opened the doors of the Better Living Centre Winter Respite with a separate Warming Centre in the same building. The Warming Centre is activated in the event of an Extreme Cold Weather Alert.

Working together with the City of Toronto, the building’s layout was designed with the appropriate safety measures to keep both clients and staff safe. In addition, to support the residents, we provide on-site harm reduction supports and on-site security for the safety of both clients and staff. Specialized staff work on-site to assist clients with case management, accessing resources and support services, and finding appropriate, affordable housing.

Strathcona Hotel Program:

On April 15th, the Strathcona Hotel Program opened in response to Covid-19. This program was designed as an alternative to dorm setting shelters in effort to achieve the required social distancing. The staff and most residents of Savards were relocated to the Strathcona Hotel Program. This program is run in partnership with the City. The residents of Savards, who were not relocated to the Strathcona Hotel, were relocated to Kennedy or Bathurst-Lake Shore.

Homes First operates 6 floors (approximately 100 clients) which were initially composed of the residents of Savards, St. Clair, and Kennedy Shelter residents who were deemed ready to successfully maintain a self-contained room.

Delta Hotel Program:

The residents of the Hotel programs are primarily from the encampments from across Toronto; most of these individuals had not received any forms of support for a very long time.

In July 2020, Homes First began operation of the Delta Hotel Program from the City of Toronto; we began with 135 residents, and since that time we have grown to over 200 rooms.

Respite, Warming Centre, and Hotel Program Performance Indicators:

	# of Unique Individuals Admitted	# of Clients With Completed Needs Assessment	Average Length of Stay in Shelter (Days)	% of Individuals with Housing Plan in Place	# of Long-term Clients in Shelter System
George Street Respite (from January 2018 to June 2019:					

	# of Unique Individuals Admitted	# of Clients With Completed Needs Assessment	Average Length of Stay in Shelter (Days)	% of Individuals with Housing Plan in Place	# of Long-term Clients in Shelter System
2018:	1127	56%	30	62%	569
2019:	648	51%	33	62%	300
Queen Elizabeth Respite (from November 2018 to April 2019):					
2018:	253	31%	29	33%	120
2019:	377	33%	28	33%	148
Bathurst-Lake Shore Shelter (from April 2019, ongoing)					
2019:	561	51%	36	50%	289
2020:	555	53%	39	50%	291
Willowdale Welcome Centre (from November 2019, ongoing):					
2019:	267	95%	61	87%	80
2020:	489	81%	42	61%	201
Better Living Centre Winter Respite:					
2019:	n/a				
2020:	167	45%	31	48%	109
Strathcona Hotel Program (from April 2020, ongoing):					
2020:	124	91%	206	69%	109
Delta Hotel Program (from July 2020, ongoing):					
2020:	398	96%	114	91%	241

HOUSING HELP WITHIN SHELTERS/RESPITES & LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM:

This program assists residents with mental health issues to improve life skills and independent living skills. For many residents, staying at a Homes First shelter is the first step in breaking a years-long pattern of homelessness and marginalization. Our practice of “assertive tolerance”, doing whatever it takes to accommodate and support individuals with complex needs is the first step in stabilizing a client.

Housing Help Within Shelters & Life Skills Program Performance Indicators:

	# of clients (caseload)	Identification of type of housing client requires	# of life skill supports put in place	Housing referrals	Housing stabilization
Kennedy Shelter:					
2016 (Dec.):	21	21	N/A	N/A	N/A
2017:	560	560	140	840	108
2018:	587	587	152	968	190
2019:	571	571	220	903	189
2020:	398	96%	114	91%	241
St. Clair & Savards:					
2014:	90	30	45	30	8
2015:	97	41	49	41	12

	# of clients (caseload)	Identification of type of housing client requires	# of life skill supports put in place	Housing referrals	Housing stabilization
2016:	496	466	557	771	241
2017:	787	684	562	950	502
2018:	982	901	544	803	499
2019:	891	891	499	809	489
St. Clair:					
2020:	301	301	167	311	155
Savards:					
2020:	68	68	68	109	21
Strachan:					
2014:	76	76	76	n/a	76
2015:	81	81	81	n/a	81
2016:	135	135	135	n/a	130
2017:	144	144	144	n/a	121
2018:	113	113	113	n/a	106
2019:	121	121	121	n/a	111
2020:	111	111	111	n/a	98
George Street:					
2018:	1127	922	N/A	255	201
2019:	648	387	n/a	113	108
Bathurst-Lake Shore:					
2019:	1355	1011	TBD	218	201
2020:	555	532	132	278	199
Willowdale Welcome Centre:					
2019:	267	267	TBD	26	22
2020:	489	467	189	298	52

MEAL PROGRAM:

The measurements utilized for Homes First's shelters food programs, is the number of meals served by Homes First staff.

- Savards:
 - **2014:** 31,452 meals, 20,968 snacks.
 - **2015:** 33,805 meals, 22,537 snacks.
 - **2016:** 33,693 meals, 18,957 snacks.
 - **2017:** 33,065 meals, 18,826 snacks.
 - **2018:** 33,394 meals, 20,840 snacks.
 - **2019:** 33,343 meals, 19,989 snacks.
 - **2020:** 9,990 meals, 6,880 snacks.
- St. Clair Shelters:
 - **2014:** 67,098 meals, 44,732 snacks.
 - **2015:** 72,118 meals, 48,079 snacks.

- **2016:** 71,878 meals, 40,442 snacks.
- **2017:** 70,539 meals, 40,164 snacks.
- **2018:** 71,240 meals, 44,460 snacks.
- **2019:** 71,293 meals, 45,311 snacks.
- **2020:** 35,600 meals, 23,300 snacks.
- Kennedy Women's Shelter:
 - **2017-2019:** 98,550 meals, 32,850 snacks served annually.
 - **2020:** 61,550 meals, 20,670 snacks.
- Strachan:
 - **2014:** 7,275 meals served at Strachan, which included both meal club program and community meals.
 - **2015:** 14,560 meals served at Strachan, which included both meal club program and community meals.
 - **2016-2020:** 96,360 meals served; a significant increase due to the newly created meal program.

In summary, staff served 203,500 meals and 50,850 snacks to residents in 2020.

From time-to-time, different community agencies and neighbours donate meals and food to Strachan, which is immediately distributed to the residents and has not been included as part of meal program numbers.

Our food program is effective in serving the nutritional needs of our shelters' residents.

HOARDING & HOUSEKEEPING PROGRAM:

This program is a separately funded program designed to provide one-on-one and hands-on assistance to the residents of Strachan House. The support comes from one qualified full-time staff dedicated to address issues related to the residents' units as well as the shared living space. The focus is on dealing with issues of hoarding, bed bugs, and other pest problems, as well as general housekeeping, which will include regular cleaning of the unit and washing of laundry; thus ensuring a safe, clean, healthy, and permanent home for those who are at the greatest risk of homelessness by directly alleviating the issues that often lead to eviction.

The ability to support people with issues of hoarding, bed bugs, and other pest issues are paramount to our residents' quality of life and health. Through this program we are able to increase the health and safety of those who are incapable of, or struggling with, performing these tasks on their own.

Additionally, this program acts as an important tool for eviction prevention. Many residents are unable to maintain their housing due to excessive hoarding or extreme pest problems, others simply need some regular guidance and encouragement to maintain their units in a safe and healthy state.

Hoarding & Housekeeping Program Performance Indicators:

# of Residents Supported						Type of Assistance Provided
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
54	67	67	59	78	33	Assistance of unit cleaning
13	32	34	33	88	27	Units cleaned
20	43	30	25	24	24	Units extreme-cleaned
13	32	36	84	88	63	Housekeeping assistance
25	43	33	41	39	34	Pest control preparation
54	67	104	100	101	75	Assistance with laundry

**This program began in mid-October of 2014.*

Before the implementation of this program, residents frequently did not adequately prepare their units for the pest control remediation to take place, resulting in delays, the potential for the problem to spread to other residents' units, misused staff time, and the additional expense of the pest control contractors' multiple visits.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS & SUPPORTS:

Assertive Follow-Up Support Services (External Services):

The Assertive Follow-Up Support Services Program began in March 2017. This program is funded through the City of Toronto and was originally funded as a one-year program. It has since been approved for renewed funding until April 2022.

This program entails HFS operating a multidisciplinary, specialized mobile team that provides in-home, follow-up support services to referred clients from the City. The clients referred to this program come through the City and have been just recently housed, often from shelters. Many of the clients in the program have long histories of homelessness and challenges in maintaining their housing. The team functions with three Follow-Up Support Workers and shares a referred caseload consisting of roughly 60-70 clients. The team assess each individual's needs in the caseload and designs plans of action by employing client-centered planning. This makes clients equal partners in planning, developing, and monitoring of their own care to increase client's capacity.

Assertive Follow-Up Support Services Indicators:

Timeline	January-June 2017	July-December 2017	2017 Total	2018 Total	2019 Total	2020 Total
Total Follow Up Support Clients	15	30	31	54	51	57
Follow Up Support Workers	2	3	3	3	3	3
Clients Discharged from Caseload	-	1	1	14	5	9
Clients Homeless and Receiving Supports	-	1	1	2	1	2

In 2017, the number of clients referred to the program increased by 100% by the second half of the year.

Addictions and Life Skills (St. Clair and Kennedy Shelters; Delta Hotel Program):

This program started in April 2017 and is funded through the Scarborough Addictions Services Partnership Network (SASP), as well as CAMH. The Addictions and Life Skills Program was initially funded for a one-year pilot project; however, funding was extended through to April 2021.

COVID-19 delayed certain aspects of the program’s delivery in 2020, and we were permitted to extend and expand the services until April 2021 to our Delta Hotel Program. This program included the hiring of a part-time addictions and life-skills counsellor to work two days a week in two of our Scarborough Shelters. One and a half days was spent conducting individual counselling sessions and the second half day was for group addictions counseling/teaching a life-skills class. One-on-one sessions were for clients struggling with substance use issues and classes served to better educate both our clients on harm reduction strategies and peer leader opportunities in the community.

Addiction and Life-Skills Indicators:

Timeline	January- June 2017	July- December 2017	2017 Total	2018 Total	2019 Total	2020 Total
Number of clients seen for one-on-one counselling	70	158	228	192	210	355
Referrals to external services	11	41	52	96	74	150
Group sessions (clients in group therapy)	8	30	38	48	43	28

In 2019, the number of clients seen for one-on-one addictions and life skills counselling with the Addictions and Life Skills worker was 210. Sessions normally run 20-40 minutes and the goal is to provide support through a trauma-informed approach and help clients build goals pertaining to substance use and developing life skills. There were 74 referrals made to external support services in the community for the clients to participate in and supplement the services they are receiving.

In 2020, 28 group sessions and 355 individual sessions took place within the Delta Hotel shelter. Individual sessions rose as there was an increased population at the new location; sessions also shrunk in time to average about 20 minutes. The purpose of the groups is to provide a different type of access to substance-use and life skill supports, as some people feel more comfortable in a social setting.

Harm Reduction in Supportive Housing (Jarvis, Meegwetch, Shuter, and Strachan; Strathcona):

This program began in September 2017 and was funded for three years through the Toronto Urban Health Fund (TUHF) a division of Toronto Public Health. In 2020 when COVID-19 safety guidelines came into place, there was a brief period without programming. The program was scheduled to end in June 2020, however TUHF allowed us to extend programming to our Strathcona Hotel Program and finish out the end of our project by December 2020.

The program employed one part-time Harm Reduction Worker and a Program Supervisor. We conducted a needs assessment at 4 housing sites to determine the unique needs at each site in year one; developed a formal harm reduction policy document within Homes First in year one; Conducted six staff training on harm reduction strategies in year one; provided 48 harm reduction workshops for residents and distribute harm reduction supplies at four housing sites in years two and year three; provided five one-on-one harm reduction mentoring session to residents each in years two and year three; recruited, trained, and supported six peers in year two, recruited four volunteer resident representatives in years two and year three; provided one training session to six peers in year three and recruited seven Homes First Peer Workers for four hours/week in year three (for 20 weeks).