

News Release

December 31, 2017

Update on Toronto homelessness services during extreme cold weather: Services remain available for those in need

Toronto's shelter system is responding to the current extreme cold weather with additional beds available to be added to the shelter system, 24/7 street outreach, and 24/7 low barrier respite drop-in services. City shelters and respite services are very busy during this extreme cold weather but there is still room to accommodate people seeking respite from the frigid weather.

The City continues to monitor the situation closely and 24-hour street outreach remains in effect. If someone on the street needs outreach assistance, please call 311. In case of an emergency (for example, a person lying on the street with skin exposed), please call 911.

Shelter occupancy was 95% last night, which is similar to occupancy levels seen over the last few months. Most of the winter respite drop-ins and Out of the Cold programs are operating at capacity, however, there were up to 60 spaces available last night and the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre overnight respite program located at 129 Peter Street had capacity to serve 20 to 30 additional clients overnight. Last night, City outreach workers engaged with 14 people, none of whom accepted service. This is fewer people than on recent cold nights as the weather appears to have driven people inside.

The Better Living Centre is the most recent winter respite service to be opened and it has the capacity to serve 110 people and saw 71 last night. The TTC is redirecting buses to stop outside the building.

Extreme Cold Weather Alerts activate additional services that focus on getting and keeping vulnerable residents inside. These include additional shelter beds, notification to community agencies to relax any service restrictions, availability of transit tokens in some drop-ins, and overnight street outreach and transportation to services. Winter respite services are available continuously until April 15 at six winter respite drop-in locations across the city, operating 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Call 311 for locations or check the web app at www.toronto.ca/homelesshelp.

Toronto is Canada's largest city, the fourth largest in North America, and home to a diverse population of about 2.8 million people. It is a global centre for business, finance, arts and culture and is consistently ranked one of the world's most livable cities. In 2017, Toronto is honouring Canada's 150th birthday with "TO Canada with Love," a year-long program of celebrations, commemorations and exhibitions. For information on non-emergency City services and programs, Toronto residents, businesses and visitors can visit <http://www.toronto.ca>, call 311, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or follow us on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/TorontoComms> and on Instagram at <http://www.instagram.com/cityofto>.

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