

News Release

January 6, 2018

Respite at Moss Park Armoury and other locations to open this evening in response to unprecedented demand and continuing extreme weather conditions

The City of Toronto announced today that the Moss Park Armoury will open at 7 p.m. this evening as an additional winter respite location providing 100 cots in response to unprecedented demand and continuing extreme weather conditions. Today is the 13th day with an Extreme Cold Weather Alert called by Toronto Public Health in effect.

The City has also implemented the following response actions:

- Increased the capacity at the Better Living Centre immediately to 200
- Added an additional 80 cots for a total capacity of 180 at the winter respite location at Regent Park Community Centre (402 Shuter St.)
- Wellesley Community Centre (495 Sherbourne St.) will also remain open overnight to provide additional respite space in the event that all other locations are at capacity.

"We are dedicated to meeting the needs of our city's most vulnerable," said Mayor John Tory. "I want to extend my sincere appreciation to City staff for this extraordinary response to address this urgent situation. The relentless cold weather conditions and the increasing demand for additional homelessness supports is unprecedented."

The warming centre located at Metro Hall, 55 John St., also remains in operation through the weekend. Toronto Paramedic Services continues to have dedicated resources available at both warming centres in the evenings to provide assistance to those in need. The City has added an overnight shift for at least four street outreach teams during extreme cold weather alerts.

City staff gained access to the federally owned Moss Park Armoury at 9 a.m. this morning and immediately began retrofitting the facility, which will be available as a 24/7 winter respite location for two weeks. When fully operational, services will include access to meals, showers, hygiene kits and referrals to additional supports such as case management and housing supports.

The City continues to explore all available measures and options to ensure services are available for homeless individuals and is actively working with the Provincial government and other partners to assess other sites across Toronto as appropriate locations for short- and long-term shelter solutions. The City of Toronto extends its thanks and appreciation to the federal and provincial governments, the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Red Cross and its many community partners in responding to this unprecedented situation.

Anyone can come in from the cold at all public buildings during regular business hours, including civic centres and libraries. First responders, TTC operators, City staff and concerned citizens have been asked to be alert for anyone in need of homeless services and to contact 311 to engage outreach support; in an emergency, call 911.

For emergency shelter, residents should call 311. Toll free in Toronto, it is 1-877-338-3398. Youth and adults can also get a walk-in referral to shelter at the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre located at 129 Peter St.

City of Toronto staff continue to actively monitor and respond to the need for homelessness services across the city. The directive to City staff and agencies providing homelessness services continues to be that services be made available to everyone who needs them. More information about services for people who are homeless is available at <https://www.toronto.ca/homelesshelp>.

A Backgrounder on City of Toronto homelessness services is available at <http://ow.ly/fx4o30hAur6>.

The following is the daily winter respite service report as of 4 a.m. January 6:

At the Assessment and Referral Centre this morning at 4 a.m. there was one person in the street respite program, indicating that most people looking for a walk-in referral to shelter over the course of the night were accommodated, or referred to one of the winter respite services.

Warming centres

- Metro Hall: 33 people
- Regent Park: 33 people

Winter respite sites

- Overall: 422 people in the 6 sites; capacity is 430 during an Extreme Cold Weather Alert (one site, Margaret's on Dundas increases to 130 from 110 during an Alert)
- Cowan Ave site: 6 of 21 spaces used
- Progress Ave. site: 45 of 49 spaces used
- St. Felix: 48 of 50 spaces used
- Margaret's on Dundas site: 99 of 130 spaces used
- Better Living Centre: 194 people

Outreach teams

- Two outreach teams were on the streets last night, supplemented by ambulance teams from Toronto Paramedic Services.
- Street outreach teams encountered 37 people (30 males, 7 females); 2 accepted service
- There were 126 concerned citizen calls, one from Toronto Police Services and 125 through 311
- Teams provided transportation to 2 people and 35 people refused service
- At the Moss Park safe injection site outreach team found 11 people using the services and 1 person accepted an offer of transportation to warm space

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. 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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