

News Release

January 4, 2018

City of Toronto opens two 24/7 warming centres

The City of Toronto has announced the opening of two 24/7 warming centres to provide additional relief for homeless individuals and their pets.

"We continue to explore all options and opportunities to protect our city's most vulnerable residents," said Mayor John Tory. "These warming centres provide accessible immediate relief during Extreme Cold Weather events and are in addition to the City's other winter respite services."

The overnight warming centres, located at Metro Hall, 55 John St., and Regent Park Community Centre, 402 Shuter St., will operate 24/7 daily beginning this evening at 7 p.m. and continuing until the current Extreme Cold Weather Alert is terminated.

The Regent Park Community Centre warming centre will be operated by the City's Office of Emergency Management in conjunction with the Canadian Red Cross and provide 100 cots, meals, showers, hygiene kits and referrals to additional supports. Metro Hall will be accessible 24/7 for the same time period and provide drop-in access to a warm, welcoming space. Toronto Paramedic Services will have a dedicated resources available at both warming centres in the evenings to provide assistance to those in need.

"Extreme winter weather conditions can turn a heart-breaking situation into a tragedy," said Councillor James Pasternak (Ward 10 York Centre), Chair of the City's Community Development and Recreation Committee. "Through action, policy and resources at the City we must do everything to bring hope and save lives."

The two new warming centres are in addition to six winter respite locations, which make available more than 400 drop-in spaces and operate continuously on a 24/7 basis until April 15.

Yesterday afternoon, the City of Toronto made a formal Request for Assistance through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre for potential use of the Moss Park Armoury. As per the established process, the Province has relayed the Request for Assistance for use of the Armoury to the Government of Canada for consideration. Discussions are continuing today to expedite the request.

The City continues to explore all available measures and options to ensure services are available for the city's homeless individuals. Anyone can come in from the cold at all public buildings during regular business hours, including civic centres and libraries. Beginning this evening, TTC operators and first responders have been asked to be alert for anyone in need of homelessness services and to contact 311 to engage outreach support.

The City has enhanced capacity and staff resources at its newest winter respite site at the Better Living Centre on the Exhibition Place grounds. Last night, the City increased the number of cots available at the centre to 150 to accommodate increased demand. Opened on December 21 with an original capacity of 100 beds, the centre had 115 spaces filled as of 4 a.m. this morning.

The City has also reiterated its expectations with front-line City staff as well as agencies delivering homelessness services that anyone who requests City-funded or operated homeless support and respite services will receive it.

Several staff from other areas of the City have been redeployed to support Shelter, Support and Housing Administration staff to review internal communication protocols regarding the sharing of shelter and winter respite service availability throughout the 24-hour period. Call centre staff working for the division and 311 service operators are also involved in this review.

The City will also continue to work with Ombudsman Susan Opler and her staff on their inquiry into these issues.

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 at 129 Peter St.

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>.

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 toronto.ca, call 311, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/TorontoComms and on Instagram at [instagram.com/cityofto](https://www.instagram.com/cityofto).