

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Community and Protective Services Committee
Comité des services communautaires et de protection
18 February 2021 / 18 février 2021**

**and Council
et au Conseil
24 February 2021 / 24 février 2021**

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**Submitted by
Soumis par:**

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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2021-CSS-GEN-0001

**SUBJECT: 2021 Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards and 2021 Ottawa
Transitional Housing Program Standards**

**OBJET: Normes sur les refuges d'urgence d'Ottawa (2021) et Normes sur les
logements de transition d'Ottawa (2021)**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Community and Protective Service Committee recommend that Council:

- 1. Approve the updated 2021 Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards, attached as Document 1, to replace the current Emergency Shelter Standards- October 2005, that apply to shelter providers who have entered into Service Agreements with the City of Ottawa.**
- 2. Approve the new 2021 Ottawa Transitional Housing Program Standards, attached as Document 2, that will apply to transitional housing program providers who have entered into Service Agreements with the City of Ottawa.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des services communautaires et de protection recommande au Conseil d'approuver :

- 1. les Normes sur les refuges d'urgence d'Ottawa (2021) ci-jointes (document 1), qui remplaceront celles d'octobre 2005, s'appliquant aux fournisseurs de refuges ayant conclu une entente de prestation de services avec la Ville d'Ottawa;**
- 2. les Normes sur les logements de transition d'Ottawa (2021) ci-jointes (document 2), qui s'appliqueront aux fournisseurs de logements de transition ayant conclu une entente de prestation de services avec la Ville d'Ottawa.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval of the revised 2021 Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards (OESS) and the new 2021 Ottawa Transitional Housing Program Standards (OTHPS). There are minor differences between the OESS and OTHPS to reflect the unique nature of each type of operation.

The term "Temporary emergency accommodations" means both shelters and transitional housing programs which play a vital role in the continuum of housing and homelessness services. Shelters are designed to meet the immediate needs of people who are homeless while transitional housing focuses on programming with a residential component, the goal of which is to provide residents with the required supports to transition to independent living and self-sufficiency.

As part of the *Office of the Auditor General's Review of the Management of Emergency Shelter Providers Report, tabled November 30, 2017*, it was recommended that the City update its emergency shelter standards. The update was also a key action identified in the updated *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030*.

The City administers provincial funding to shelter providers and transitional housing programs. As such, the City is accountable to ensure that shelter providers and transitional housing program providers ensure equitable access and services for all clients/residents, that services are delivered in compliance with the purchase of service agreement, and that funding is only utilized for eligible clients/residents and services.

The Standards help the City fulfill its oversight role as Service Manager. The Standards supplement the contractual agreement and are not meant to be exhaustive. They provide minimum guidelines in the areas of major governance, operations and service delivery to ensure a consistent standard is achieved in temporary emergency accommodations.

There are 13 sections and numerous subsections covered by the proposed Standards, which have been updated to varying degrees in accordance with public/stakeholder consultation and best practice research. The Standards also include updates to reflect new operational realities resulting from COVID-19 which have been drafted in consultation with Ottawa Public Health.

The updated OESS includes new, enhanced and more comprehensive requirements and reflect best and current practices and policies.

Through the process of updating the OESS, it was determined that there should be a separate set of standards for transitional housing program providers and the Ottawa Transitional Housing Program Standards ("OTHPS") were developed to reflect the unique operational and programming needs of transitional housing. While these closely resemble the OESS, they have key differences in terms of service and client expectations.

While the City also has agreements with hotels/motels/post-secondary institutions to provide temporary overflow accommodations when the family shelter system is at capacity, these privately owned facilities are not required to adhere to the Standards. Service requirements and quality assurance are identified through the Purchase of Service Agreements with the hotel/motel provider. That said, clients receiving placement at hotels/motels/post-secondary institutions are provided the same housing-focused support services that are offered in shelters or transitional housing programs.

There are also shelters providers and transitional housing programs that are not funded through the City, and as such, they are not required to adhere to the Standards.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications from the report's recommendations.

Public Consultation/Input:

To update Ottawa's Emergency Shelter Standards, staff first conducted a comprehensive literature review and an environmental scan of the standards of seven municipalities in Canada. This review provided insights into best practices and common approaches to providing shelter services and supports. Borrowing from the best practices, common approaches, and previously received client and community feedback, a draft version of the OESS was prepared.

Over 2019 and 2020, Housing Services sought feedback from internal and external stakeholders on the draft OESS. Internally, the document was circulated to various City departments and service areas for review and comment. Externally, the City of Ottawa received feedback through consultations, including consultations with City-funded agencies, ancillary partners, and people with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing precariousness.

Of note, these consultations and feedback included:

- In-person consultations with the Aboriginal Community Advisory Board and other ancillary partners
- In-person consultations with staff, including frontline workers, human resources, maintenance, and management staff from all City-funded shelters and transitional housing programs
- An in-person consultation session with people with lived experience of homelessness
- Feedback from the consultations on the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030, which included over 75 in-person consultations with over 1200 people, over 300 of whom had lived experience of homelessness and/or unstable housing
- Survey results from the 2018 provincially mandated Point-in-Time Count, which surveyed over 1,400 individuals, all of whom were experiencing homelessness and/or unstable housing
- Ottawa Public Health review of OESS and OTHPS to ensure adherence to public health best practices, including lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic

Findings of the literature review and environmental scan, as well as feedback from the consultation sessions and surveys, have been incorporated into the updated OESS and the new OTHPS.

There is general agreement on the proposed Standards from internal and external stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

The City ensures the delivery of temporary emergency accommodations to those in need both directly and through the purchase of services. The City contracts with 10 community shelters/transitional housing programs for singles/families and operates one City-owned shelter for families. The 10 community shelters/transitional housing programs are operated by eight agencies (three for families, two for single adult men, one for single women, one for both single men/women, and three for youth). In addition, the City maintains agreements with 23 hotels, motels and post-secondary institutions to provide temporary emergency accommodation when the family shelter system is at capacity.

The City has a service agreement with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to administer funding to temporary emergency accommodation providers under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI). As the administrator of CHPI funds, the City is accountable to ensure that services are delivered in compliance with the purchase of service agreement, in a manner that is equitable for clients and residents, and that funding is applied only for eligible clients/residents and services. The City's responsibility also includes inspecting facilities and sharing information/resources that support service delivery.

Ottawa's current standards, the Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards, were developed and approved by Council in 2005 (ACS2005-CPS-HOU-0014). Reviewing and updating the standards is an action identified under the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030, as well as the *Office of the Auditor General's Review Management of Emergency Shelter Providers – Contract Management tabled November 30, 2017*.

When referring to the "Shelter System" or "Temporary Emergency Accommodation", it is understood that this means both Shelters and Transitional Housing Programs.

Shelters:

Shelter services include safe and secure temporary emergency accommodation, food, and case management supports for people experiencing homelessness and includes both families and single individuals.

Shelters serve all clients experiencing homelessness with or without a referral. Clients may self-refer in person or over the phone. The typical length of stay in a shelter is intended to be temporary and many clients use this type of service only once before returning to permanent housing. To continue receiving shelter services, clients are required to apply for rent geared to income housing. This ensures clients have a prospect of leaving the system.

Transitional Housing Programs:

Transitional Housing provides programming with a residential component. Residents receive required supports to transition to independent living and self-sufficiency. The level of supports can vary depending on individual needs. Unlike emergency shelter services which are designed to meet the immediate needs of people who are experiencing homelessness, transitional housing provides programming (e.g. life skills, training, education) with accommodations on site. The accommodations are longer-term and more service intensive than emergency shelters.

Due to the unique operational needs of shelters and transitional housing programs, two sets of standards are being presented with this report: the Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards (OESS) and the Ottawa Transitional Housing Program Standards (OTHPS). The OESS and OTHPS provide minimum requirements for the provision of shelter services and transitional housing programs.

DISCUSSION

On November 30, 2017, the Office of the Auditor General tabled its *Review of the Management of Emergency Shelter Providers – Contract Management* report which recommended that the City review and update its Emergency Shelter Standards so that they are more comprehensive, detailed and measurable.

The report contained five recommendations, all of which will be complete if this report is approved. The 3 outstanding recommendations addressed through this report include: updating the OESS, improved inspection tools that link to the updated OESS and the implementation of a standardized line of inquiry which reinforces contribution expectations.

Over the past two years, the City's Housing Services has worked closely with shelter and transitional housing program staff and management, ancillary partners, and people with lived experience of homelessness or housing instability to review the current

standards. Staff also reviewed best practices from other jurisdictions. The findings from the consultations and research, as well as feedback collected as part of completing the *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030*, have been incorporated into the current Standards.

Housing Services worked with internal partners such as Ottawa Public Health, Legal Services and Ottawa Police Services who provided feedback based on their subject matter expertise.

The revised Standards will:

- Better guide providers to meet the current needs of clients/residents
- Ensure greater accountability on the part of providers and the City in the delivery of services to clients/residents
- Maintain a consistent minimum standard of service delivery for providers
- Support the *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030* outcomes which include improving client/resident experience and ensuring the system works more efficiently for clients/residents, frontline staff and administrators
- Provide guidance on recommendations resulting from COVID-19 that will help ensure temporary emergency accommodation services adhere to measures recommended by Ottawa Public Health

The Standards are meant to provide minimum guidelines in the areas of major governance, operations and service delivery.

Due to the unique operational needs of shelters and transitional housing programs, two sets of standards are recommended: the updated Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards (OESS) and the new Ottawa Transitional Housing Program Standards (OTHPS).

These Standards:

- Address areas identified in the standards as missing or insufficient in the *Office of the Auditor General's Review of the Management of Emergency Shelter Providers – Contract Management* report and/or feedback provided through consultations including those conducted in support of the *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030*
- Standardize and detail existing practices that were not previously included in the 2005 OESS
- Enhance the Guiding Principles that are designed to guide providers in their decision-making and to promote good governance;

- Set the expectation that service delivery is based on accepting and respecting the inherent dignity, diversity, experiences, and abilities of all individuals;
- Ensure temporary emergency accommodation services are being delivered in accordance with public health best practices including, lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Align with new or updated policies and legislation
- Enhance requirements for providers to create and document their policies and procedures
- Outline minimum requirements

Of note, the documents include:

- New considerations and measures to be taken to better serve specific populations including clients/residents with disabilities, independent youth, children, LGBTQ2S clients/residents and Indigenous clients/residents
- Intake and case management requirements which reflect a housing-focused approach, and better matching of service delivery to client/resident needs
- A standardized line of inquiry for the intake process to support consistency, diversion efforts and reinforcement of contribution expectations (the City's Contribution Guidelines outline how a client's contributions to their stay are determined, based on their income, needs and housing readiness)
- Creation of new mandatory training guidelines for staff and volunteers to ensure providers are equipped to deliver service safely and effectively
- Direction specific to maintain the health and safety of staff and clients/residents including policies for restricting weapons and prohibited items and service restrictions
- Ottawa Public Health recommendations for enhanced infection prevention and control measures which include lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic
- More robust requirements for pest control policy and procedures that specifically address bed bugs and requirements for an integrated pest/rodent control program
- Enhancements to requirements for providers that offer food services including feeding pregnant or breastfeeding clients/residents, providing appropriate food for children, accommodating dietary restrictions and a requirement for food donation policies

The Standards set the expectation that service delivery is based on accepting and respecting the inherent dignity, diversity, experiences, and abilities of all individuals. Temporary emergency accommodation services are accessed by a wide range of

individuals including newcomers, women, men, youth and families. During the development of the OESS and OTHPS, Housing Services engaged service providers and community groups that serve women, men, newcomers, Indigenous people, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S and families with children. Their feedback was incorporated into the final documents.

The Standards now outline special considerations for people with disabilities, independent youth, services to children, LGBTQ2S and Indigenous clients/residents. These sections require specific policies and/or procedures to ensure individual needs are met and respected.

For example, providers must:

- Develop and implement a policy that details how services are provided to LGBTQ2S clients in a manner that preserves their safety and dignity and indicates that people with diverse gender identities are welcome
- Create an environment that encourages Indigenous clients to self-identify and directly ask clients if they are First Nations, Inuit or Métis so they can benefit from culturally appropriate services
- Develop and implement a policy that details how self-identified Indigenous clients will be referred to culturally-appropriate services and how timely referrals will be made to Indigenous service providers
- Work towards eliminating real or perceived barriers that inhibit access to shelter services for people with all types of disabilities (e.g. cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health illness)

The Gender and Race Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development Service will play an active role in providing ongoing guidance during the revision and update process for future OESS and OTHPS iterations. This group is developing the Women and Gender Equity Strategy framework 2021-2022 that includes actions for Housing Services.

The City also has agreements with hotels/motels/post-secondary institutions to provide temporary overflow accommodations when the family shelter is at capacity. As private businesses, these facilities are not required to adhere to the Standards. Rather, the service requirements and minimum amenities are outlined in the purchase of Service Agreements with the hotel/motel/post-secondary institution operator. Nevertheless, the housing focused case management process' are still provided for clients staying at hotel/motel sites.

There are also shelters/transitional housing programs which are not funded through the City, and as such are not required to adhere to the Standards.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications.

CONSULTATION

From 2019 to 2021, Housing Services sought feedback from internal and external stakeholders on the draft Standards. Internally, the document was circulated to various City departments and service areas for review and comment. Externally, the City of Ottawa received feedback through consultations, including consultations with City-funded agencies, ancillary partners, and people with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing precariousness.

Of note, these consultations and feedback included:

- In-person consultations with the Aboriginal Community Advisory Board and other ancillary partners
- In-person consultations with staff, including frontline workers, human resources, maintenance, and management from all City-funded shelters and transitional housing programs
- An in-person consultation session with people with lived experience of homelessness
- Feedback from the consultations on the *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030*, which included over 75 in-person consultations with over 1200 people, over 300 of whom had lived experience of homelessness and/or unstable housing
- Survey results from the 2018 provincially mandated *Point-in-Time Count*, which surveyed over 1400 individuals, all of whom were experiencing homelessness and/or unstable housing
- Ottawa Public Health review of OESS and OTHPS to ensure adherence to public health best practices including lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic

General areas of focus highlighted through consultations included equitable service access and delivery, case management and access to supports for clients, timely referrals to Indigenous service providers, maintenance and cleanliness including pest control, safety and security.

The findings from the research review and feedback from the various consultations have been incorporated into the updated Standards. A final draft of the revised Standards was circulated to the Executive Directors and Senior Management of City-funded shelters/transitional housing programs, as well as internal partners, with no concerns expressed.

If approved, the full Standards will be implemented and circulated to funded shelters/transitional housing providers. Staff within the Community & Shelter Branch will be available to assist with any questions. The Standards will also be available to the general public online at Ottawa.ca.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

This is a City-wide report.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS

Not applicable.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to the implementation of the report recommendations.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk implications.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no asset management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the report recommendations.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The Standards presented include specific considerations for serving clients/residents with disabilities which will facilitate the provision of barrier free service.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications in this report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The revised Standards support the Term of Council Strategic Priority, "Our Thriving Communities". Updating the Standards is an action identified under the *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030*.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- **Document 1:** 2021 Ottawa Emergency Shelter Standards
- **Document 2:** 2021 Ottawa Transitional Housing Program Standards

DISPOSITION

The City has Purchase of Service Agreements with each funded service provider which requires them to comply with the OESS or OTHPS. These agreements are a requirement to receive funding.

Appendix B of the Standards outlines the in-effect dates for the new or enhanced requirements which include dates ranging from August 31, 2021 to December 31, 2022. All sections not identified as part of these in-effect dates are considered effective immediately upon Council approval.

Further, per the Standards, the City will continue to conduct:

- Compliance Reviews every 30 months to ensure that providers are complying with all aspects of the Standards
- Site Reviews annually, on years when a Compliance Review is not conducted, and/or as requested by the provider or at other times as determined by the City to ensure that facilities are well-maintained and in a state of good repair

The OESS and OTHPS will be reviewed and updated every five years, with the opportunity for shelter providers, transitional housing program providers, internal stakeholders, ancillary partners, and clients/residents to provide feedback and input.