

**COVID-19 – Human Needs Task Force**  
Frequently Asked Questions: Physical Distancing Community Shelter - Singles  
**April 20, 2020**

Housing Services is working with emergency shelter partners to identify locations suitable for use to create physical distancing in the singles emergency shelter system. The singles shelters are currently operating at capacity, using overflow beds to meet demands. Within the shelter environment, it is not possible to create or meet the physical distancing recommendations of Ottawa Public Health. In light of this need, the City has created a Physical Distancing Community Shelter Task Force to help find solutions. The task force is identifying temporary alternate locations to reduce overcrowding and help decrease the chance of community spread by allowing for the recommended physical distancing in the shelter system.

**Q. How many beds do we need to allow shelter users to physically distance?**

The current emergency shelter system is at capacity, with all shelters experiencing overcrowding and utilizing overflow services. We need a minimum of 100 to 150 additional beds to accommodate those currently using overflow services and to reduce pressures on the current shelter system.

**Q. Can our current shelter system in Ottawa accommodate the need for shelter users to physically distance?**

No, there is no capacity within the current shelter system to respond to the needs for an additional 100 to 150 beds. The task force has explored many options for alternate locations, including the possible use of community centres, churches, private facilities, hotels, motels and schools, including colleges and universities.

**Q. Has an alternate site been selected to support the need for temporary physical distancing?**

The Jim Durrell Recreation Centre, at 1265 Walkley Road has been designated as it meets the necessary required capacity needs and can support physical distancing requirements.

**Q. What types of clients will be using this community shelter and what is the capacity?**

This shelter criteria are currently for single men -shelter users aged 18 years and older, with low acuity (who require little to no supports). The Centre can provide temporary accommodation for up to 150 single men.

**Q. What amenities will be available at this location?**

The Centre will have dining space, bathrooms, showers, common sleeping areas in the two rinks, including access to computers, Wi-Fi and televisions. Food will be delivered into the facility.

**Q. Will there be staff and/ or security on site?**

Yes. There will 24/7 staff and security guards providing supports to the occupants.

**Q. When will the facility be open?**

While an exact date is not yet set, the facility will start receiving single men from other shelter facilities the week of April 27.

**Q. How long will Jim Durrell be used as temporary accommodation?**

Due to the ongoing uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to identify how long this facility will be required. It is estimated that the facility will be open at minimum until Tuesday, June 30.

Opening the centre for this purpose is a short-term, temporary solution as the City explores other medium-to long-term solutions to create extra capacity within the singles emergency shelter system.

**Q. How will preventative COVID-19 measures be practiced at Jim Durrell?**

This centre is being set up to support physical distancing. It is not an isolation centre. Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be available for all staff and clients who may exhibit symptoms before they can be transferred to an alternate location. In addition, cleaning services will be contracted externally to ensure enhanced cleaning procedures on high-touch surfaces. Hand sanitizers will be accessible along with Ottawa Public signage featuring guidelines for COVID-19 prevention procedures.

**Q. Is Ottawa Police Services aware of this initiative?**

Yes, Housing Services has been in contact with both Ottawa Police Services and By-law and Regulatory Services to inform and discuss operations at the site.

**Q. What happens if someone tests positive for COVID-19?**

Any person who becomes symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19 will be moved to the Routhier Community Centre.

**Q. Why not use hotels and motels for this purpose?**

The City continues outreach to secure hotel rooms for both the singles and family emergency shelter system, to support physical distancing. The City has been successful in procuring 70 hotel rooms for families, with 70 families moving to date. Another 70 rooms have been procured and moves will start this week. The City is actively working on options for singles.

**Q. What is taking so long to secure hotels/motels for everyone?**

Many hotels/motels in the City have ceased operations in the short term. Many others will not accept people who have potentially had exposure to COVID-19 or tested positive due to health and safety concerns for staff and other guests. Others are catering to diplomatic, governmental or essential business travel. While the City has had many hotel/motel providers step forward to provide options for families experiencing homelessness in addition to health care workers, securing rooms for the singles emergency shelter system has proven more challenging. The City is exploring both room rental and leasing options.

**Q. Is it true that communal sites are not the best options to support physical distancing?**

Ideally, the City would be able to procure space where everyone has access to their own kitchen and bathroom. As the City continues efforts to secure hotel rooms, this centre has been identified as a temporary solution to help reduce overcrowding in the men's shelter system

**Q. Will the Centre be cleaned prior to returning to community use?**

The Centre will have enhanced daily cleaning while operations are underway. Before the Centre is returned to community use, it will be cleaned and sanitized following all protocols and guidelines identified by Ottawa Public Health.

**Q. What do I do if there is a problem in my neighbourhood that is associated with the Centre?**

The City will provide a telephone number that community members can call should there be any concerns with the occupants of the centre.

**Q. What are you going to do to encourage people to stay inside?**

Some of the people who are staying at the centre may have employment and will go to work daily. The centre is also being set up with computers, television and other individual activities like cards and books.