

A series of footprints in snow, receding into the distance, leading the eye towards the top of the frame.

Out of the Cold Toronto

30 YEARS LATER-A GROWING CRISIS

November 2016 - April 2017

A series of footprints in snow, receding into the distance, leading the eye towards the top of the frame.

DIXON **HALL**
neighbourhood services

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Executive Summary

For the past 30 years, 16 faith-based organizations have operated Out of the Cold (OOTC) programs across the city, opening doors of their places of worship to thousands of Toronto's homeless who rely on this vital program during the winter months.

The OOTC program operates from November – April and is often a last resort for the homeless who require overnight accommodation.

The 16 faith-based organizations run their individual programs and provide guests with warm and safe places to sleep, hot nutritious meals, and additional supports such as clothing, legal clinics, foot care, and laundry facilities. OOTC guests have come to rely on this compassionate and warm welcome. This care is provided thanks to over 3,000 volunteers. In addition, each of the faith-based organizations assume all financial responsibilities associated with running the program.

In 2003, the City of Toronto approached Dixon Hall to take on a support role in assisting faith partners in ensuring that certain shelter standards are met. This support is provided through a trained staff team who have a deep knowledge of the population and assure a continuity of service through a consistent and professional presence across the system. In addition, this team is responsible for case management delivery which works to provide guests with long-term housing solutions.

Since January of 2016 Dixon Hall has engaged a Client Intervention Worker and a Data Coordinator to support the needs of the homeless community who access the Out of the Cold Programs. The data collection and analysis position can now provide the City of Toronto with a better understanding of the populations using the program. And the Client Intervention Worker allows Dixon Hall to provide real solutions in response to the needs of the community.

We thank the City of Toronto for the funding to make this program response a central piece of the work that we do.

Executive Summary

In 2016-17 the number of beds available at Out of the Cold sites increased by 6%. That increase allowed for a total of 762 additional overnight stays. However, demand for those additional beds outpaced the capacity increase. In fact, **the number of overnight stays at Out of the Cold increased by 9%, from 12,125 in 2015-16 to 13,199 this season. This represents a 9% demand increase over a 6% capacity jump. Total occupancy has now hit 96%, up from 90% the previous year.**

Therefore, the Out of the Cold program is facing a breaking point within a two year period unless something is done immediately to decrease the demand or increase the supply of beds.

The Out of the Cold has become an integral part of the City's Emergency Response to Homelessness, indeed it has become institutionalized. It is incumbent on us to implement the known solutions to the growing challenges of faced by homeless people in our city. As a city we find ourselves at a critical juncture that challenges our resolve to continue to be a 'compassionate city'.

2017 marks the 30th anniversary of the OOTC program, and we're pleased to share with you the 2016/2017 Dixon Hall report - *Out of the Cold Toronto: 30 Years Later - A Growing Crisis*, to highlight our findings from the last two years of data collection. Some of the trends are disturbing; however the solutions presented give hope.

I invite you to be part of the solution by volunteering at an Out of the Cold site, donating to one of the faith-based organizations, or to Dixon Hall. In addition, you can help make systemic changes by contacting your local city councillor and letting them know that ending homelessness matters to you.



Neil Hetherington, CEO, Dixon Hall

Brief History of the OOTC Program



Image Source:
St. Michael's College School

The Out of the Cold Program started in 1987, after a homeless man who was befriended by a group of school children from St. Michael's school passed away. His death impacted the students and with the help of Sister Moran, they began to discuss how to alleviate homelessness.

As a result, Sister Moran started connecting with various faith groups throughout the city and the OOTC was born, starting in a few basements of Toronto churches. Today it is offered at 21 locations city-wide including mosques and synagogues.

In 2003 as the program grew, Dixon Hall became involved when approached by the City to provide management and operations support to various faith groups.

Out of the 21 locations, Dixon Hall works in partnership with 16 faith-based organizations and supports them with various case management services, including counselling, housing supports, social service referrals, connections to year round primary health supports, on-site safety and security and blankets for the guests.

For more information on the OOTC program, Michael Swan, editor of the Catholic Register wrote a remarkable book on the evolution of the OOTC program titled:

"Out of the Cold: A History of Caring"

The book is available at:

<http://www.catholicregister.org/crbooks/item/21169>

or via email: books@catholicregister.org

OOTC Sites and Guest Capacity

Site	Season Dates	Weekday	Available mats
St. Patrick's	Nov. 20 - Apr. 2	Sundays	80
St. Mathew Our Lady Peace	Nov. 13 - Mar. 26	Sundays	27
Lakeshore at St. Margaret's	Nov. 21 - Mar. 27	Mondays	25
St. Brigid's Annex	Nov. 14 - Apr. 17	Mondays	70
Beth Emeth	Jan. 9 - Feb. 27	Mondays	30
St. Aidan's	Nov. 7 - Apr. 24	Mondays	25
Evangel Hall	Nov. 1 - Mar. 28	Tuesdays	30
Beth Sholom	Jan. 3 - Mar. 29	Tuesdays	70
Yorkminster Park Baptist	Nov. 2 - Apr. 5	Wednesdays	60
Holy Blossom Temple	Nov. 3 - Mar. 30	Thursdays	45
First Interfaith at St. Matthew's	Nov. 3 - Mar. 30	Thursdays	60
Chinese Gospel	Jan. 5 - Mar. 30	Thursdays	15
Eastminster United	Nov. 4 - Mar. 31	Fridays	45
All Saints Kingsway Anglican	Nov. 25 - Apr. 7	Fridays	20
Knox United	Nov. 11 - Mar. 31	Fridays	20
Blythwood Road Baptist	Nov. 5 - Apr. 1	Saturdays	65

Out of the Cold: Increasing Need

Through analysis of stats compiled from 2015/2016 season compared to 2016/2017 season, we see evidently how the OOTC program is scrambling to meet the increased demand of overnight stays—where overnight stays represent each time a shelter mat is used by an individual and mats represent the overall capacity within the system.

As illustrated in Table 1 below, **the OOTC program has seen an increase in overnight stays by 9% in 2015/16 to 13,199 in 2016/17**. Many of the sites are already at capacity, and the concentration of guests is not evenly distributed across all participating sites.

We believe there is an opportunity to ensure that more guests are served with the implementation of a balancing system. A system that would allow for sites with additional capacity to more easily accept guests from other locations. This system could come from increasing real time knowledge of the capacity of each location and/or transportation solutions between sites.

The mat capacity of the 16 OOTC locations offered by faith-based partners varies from site to site and ranges from 15-80. In the 2016/2017 season, with the support of the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), faith-based partners added 67 mats to system capacity. **This addition of sleeping spaces increased availability for the entire season up until the end of March by 762 or 6%, bringing the total to 13,522 available overnight stays throughout the season.** *This number does not include the added capacity for April.* The capacity increase is outweighed by the guest demand. At this rate, to maintain our current occupancy of 98%, faith based partners would need to continually increase the number of mats in their unique programs which is financially unsustainable.

Out of the Cold: Increasing Need

Table 1: OOTC Overnight Service Usage: (November to end of March)

COUNTS	Previous Season	Current Season	Seasonal Difference	
	OOTC 2015/16	OOTC 2016/17	#	%
Overnight Guests usage	12, 125	13, 199	+1, 074	+8.86%
Available Mats (Capacity)	12, 760	13, 522	+762	+6%
Dinner guests★	28, 024	28, 538	+514	+1.83%
Breakfast guests★	no data	11, 220	n/a	n/a
Tokens★	12, 123	13, 029	+906	+7.47%
Volunteers on site	10,990	9,948	-1,042	-10%
Guest visits to Health and volunteer services★	2, 111	1, 950	-161	-7.63%
Guest visits to on-site Nurses only	no data	1, 562	n/a	n/a

Capacity is not the only area of the program to see increase in demand. Guests of the OOTC program also receive a nutritious meal – *dinner that night, and breakfast the next morning*. In 2016/2017, 28,538 dinners were served, which represents a 1.83% annual increase. Part of this can be attributed to overall program attendance increasing, however it also points to the rising cost of food, and food insecurity in Toronto. This fact is more evident when you consider that the amount of people accessing the program to eat dinner only is double the amount of overnight guests. As food prices continue to rise, the OOTC program will continue to serve as a meal replacement option for the poor. This also leads to financial pressures on each of the faith partners.

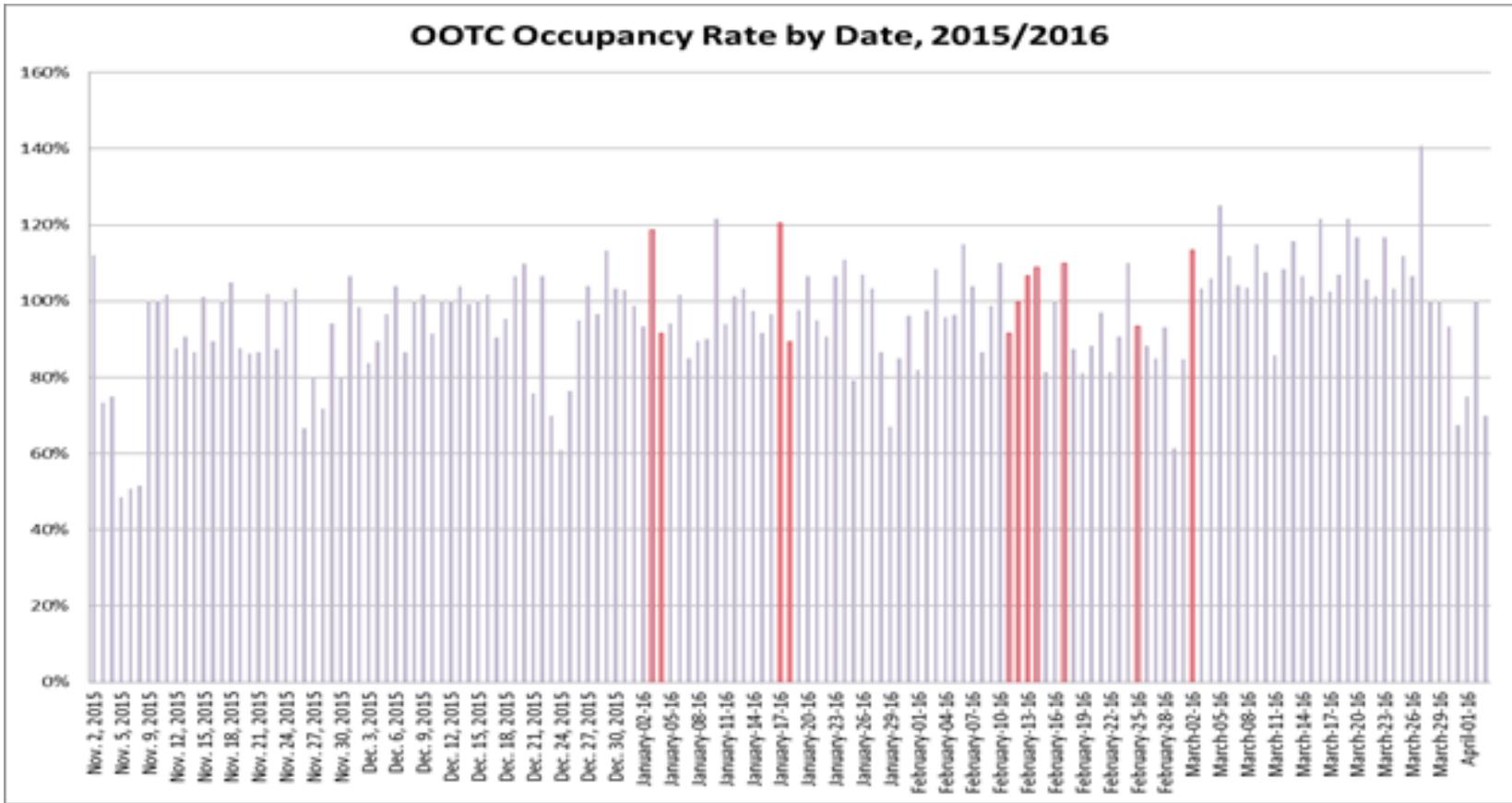
Out of the Cold: Increasing Need

Volunteer retention and recruitment poses a new challenge. Faith-based partners are responsible for sourcing and supporting all volunteers for the program. The program saw a 10% decrease in onsite volunteers who work during the evening and overnight shifts. **To address the increase in demand, more volunteers are needed in the next coming season.**

The capacity challenges in the OOTC program have come to mirror the occupancy pressures in the Emergency Shelter system and demand is growing. **We predict that the OOTC program will be operating beyond capacity within the next two years.** In reality, the OOTC program which was intended as a temporary measure designed to support the emergency Shelter System, has become a critical fixture in the system. Today the occupancy rate in the emergency Shelter System is 98%. **If the OOTC program did not operate, OOTC guests would have nowhere to go . One can then make an logical assumption that the City of Toronto will then see a preventable increase in demand on our health care system, and an unconscionable increase in deaths of homeless women and men.**

Occupancy Rate: Warmer or Cooler Weather, Demand Stays High

Stat analysis has also proven that extreme weather does not impact program occupancy. Most sites remain at capacity or close to capacity regardless of Extreme Cold Weather Alerts (ECWA) issued by the City of Toronto. Program occupancy is mostly consistent across the entire season. The OOTC program is a critical piece of the Emergency Shelter system and is not contingent on extreme cold weather.



*Red lines are nights when ECWA were issued.

Occupancy rate by site ranged from a minimum of 31% of the site capacity to 141% of the site capacity.

Understanding OOTC Guests

Table 3: Overnight Guest Mat Usage by Age Range

Guests by Age Range	Previous season 2015/16		Current Season* 2017/16	
< 25 years	101	1 %	127	1%
25-35	1,517	13%	1,120	9%
35-45	2,071	17%	2,299	18%
45-55	4,197	35%	4,383	34%
55-65	2,956	25%	3,644	29%
65+	1,175	10%	1,208	9%
Total	12017	100%	12,781*	100%

* Totals indicate available intake and date of birth data

Conclusions on Demographics

- In 2016/17 season, 84% of all OOTC guests were males; 14% were females; 0.05% were transgender; and 1.6% individuals that did not specify gender (Table 4)
- Population of female program guests tend to be younger than the population of male users (previous season)
- Nearly 40% of guests known to the program are in the seniors age range (55+) and are aging with the program rather than finding suitable housing
- The high concentration of senior males in the program suggest that mental health programs and employment opportunities are necessary to improve the probability of these individuals finding and maintaining adequate housing

Understanding OOTC Guests

Table 4: Unique Guests 2015/16 season

AGE GROUP	Male Guests		Female Guests		Gender not Specified		All Guests	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<25	19	2	13	7	4	4	36	3
25 < 35	162	17	45	26	17	17	224	18
35 < 45	232	24	35	20	24	23	291	23
45 < 55	308	32	52	30	30	29	390	31
55 < 65	185	19	23	13	13	13	221	18
>=65	52	5	5	3	7	7	64	5
Not Known	6	1	1	1	8	8	15	1
Total	964	100	174	100	103	100	1241	100

★ This number is based on a careful consideration of all available identifying indicators (name, DOB, gender specification, site date visit) but may still include individual duplications or omissions in particular among one-time or infrequent overnight guests during the OOTC season.

Frequent Overnight Guests Identified in 2015-16

Table 5: Overnight Stays by Unique Guest

Overnight Stays	Male Guests		Female Guests		Gender not Specified		All Guests	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	358	37	69	40	94	91	521	42
2 to 9	358	37	60	34	9	9	427	34
10 to 39	179	19	32	18	0		211	17
40 to 69	39	4	6	3	0		45	4
70 to 99	26	3	4	2	0		30	2
100 plus	4	0	3	2	0		7	1
Total	964	100	174	100	103	100	1241	100

82 frequent users were identified: overnight guests with 40 or more overnight stays, are more likely to be 55 years old or above. Of frequent users, 84% are male and 16% are female. Additional supportive housing units and mental health supports could move this demographic to long-term supported housing solutions.



Program Impact: Making a Case for Case Management

Stats indicate the largest demographic of guests is male seniors. In our experience working with these guests, we know a significant percentage of these individuals have aged with the program and are chronically homeless, requiring a more comprehensive level of care and services.

Providing case management and collecting data on-site is crucial to the program guests, as is connecting them with proper supports and resources during and beyond the season. Our Client Intervention Worker (CIW) has demonstrated a need for additional support to adequately handle the growing needs from guests of the program.

The CIW makes referrals for individual guests to various services and supports for some of the longest program users and diverts others from chronic homelessness. The CIW conducts an intake process with guests, which results in he or she becoming a client of Dixon Hall. Through partnerships with other community and city organizations and through Dixon Hall's own multi-service programs, these individuals receive support and follow-up through the year. This allows us to help these individuals gain life skills, housing, and employment opportunities to mitigate the issues that lead to chronic homelessness.



Program Impact: Making a Case for Case Management

CIW Successes

- Of the 28 CIW Intakes housed during the 2016/2017 season, 64% (18) remain housed.
- This season to date, 34 of 80 intakes were housed representing a 42.5% success rate
- A total of 278 referrals were made to off-site programs and services (i.e. Ontario Works, education, and health resources)
- “Site full” Referrals*: Over the course of the 2016/2017 OOTC season, it is averaged that 41 individuals are referred to other shelters each week, Central Intake or SHARC each week. Note: these referrals are made by site staff and not Dixon Hall CIW.
- Dixon Hall has begun to track these numbers recently and will have comparative data and trend analysis in coming seasons
- The success of current Client Intervention Workers and future Client Intervention Workers is contingent on working throughout the year to maintain contact with OOTC clients.**

**** Experts believe that intervention is needed for 18 months once in permanent housing in order to achieve lasting results**

*Refer to Appendix for full set of definitions

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Program Impact: Making a Case for Case Management

Table 6: OOTC Client Intervention Worker Successes

OOTC season	CIW Intakes	Referrals	Housed
Previous season (January 2016 to October 2016)	57	148	28
Current season (November 2016 to April 2017)	80	130	34
Total	137	278	62

There are more individuals coming to the program with complex health, mental health and addiction challenges who require intensive case management. We believe additional Client Intervention Workers will help chronically homeless people achieve the opportunity to live in decent permanent housing.

That lasting solution requires follow-up with the guests once the season has ended to provide tailored support to maintain that housing.

By employing additional Client Intervention Workers, we can provide at a cost of \$1,500 per person:

- Improved continuity of support and services through effective referrals
- Better coordination of services
- More accurate identification of client needs
- More appropriate use of services
- Better continuity of treatment
- Permanent housing
- Reduced costs to the criminal justice and health care systems





Conclusion

The creation of the Out of the Cold program 30 years ago was never intended to be a permanent solution. The immediate goal was to prevent unnecessary deaths in the homeless community and address a gap not being met by the system. The pressures in the emergency Shelter System have made the OOTC program a critical piece of the existing system now and for the foreseeable future.

We anticipate that the program will reach complete capacity within 2 seasons if the usage trends continue to increase as predicted. Extreme weather poses more risks to the homeless than ever – not only are winters extreme, but extreme heat poses a new set of challenges for the homeless to cope with and remain healthy throughout. Drop-in sites provided by the City of Toronto are good responses to extreme weather but effectiveness could increase when coupled with Dixon Hall’s services and the OOTC program.

The OOTC program needs to continue adding beds to meet capacity demands, and more Client Intervention Workers to complete intake, seek affordable housing, and work with guests beyond the traditional winter months. Our desire is to work closely with faith-based partners to ensure access to a dedicated, varied volunteer base to combat the declining volunteer rates.

The continuity of service provided by Dixon Hall’s staff team- the support of the Client Intervention Worker and the Data Coordinator along with the development of effective collaborations with primary health supports and broader sectoral partners have demonstrated the need for service delivery changes. Additional Client Intervention Workers can improve outcomes for program guests. We have seen successes in obtaining permanent housing for clients of the program but more additional workers are needed to effectively case manage and provide consistent support based on increasing volume of overnight stays.

Conclusion

By working in collaboration with city funders, mental health supports, faith partners, and primary health advocates we can address the systemic issues facing Toronto's homeless population and advocate for change to ensure a brighter future for our most vulnerable citizens.

We encourage concerned citizens to get involved and help mitigate the issue in a variety of ways;

- Volunteer at one of the OOTC sites with a faith-based organization
- Donate to a participating faith-based organization or to Dixon Hall
- Reach out to your local city councillor and ensure the urgency around ending homelessness is understood.



Acknowledgment

We would like to pay tribute to the visionary founder of the Out of Cold program in Toronto, the late Sister Susan Moran, who sadly passed away in December 2016.

She worked tirelessly to campaign and advocate for greater awareness and recognition of the issue of homelessness and those who fall through the cracks in the housing and shelter system. Her work brought tangible compassionate care to the streets of Toronto.

Sister Susan's efforts have inspired countless individuals to continue her work on homelessness and have kept this important challenge on agendas at all levels of government. Running an OOTC program requires dedication, time, energy but most of all leadership - of which she had abundance.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to each of the faith-based partners and the masses of dedicated volunteers who for the past 30 years have kept Sister Susan's pursuit alive by welcoming the most vulnerable citizens of our city as guests into their places of worship.

We would also like to thank our City partners who fund Dixon Hall to provide the continuity of service and ongoing support to OOTC partners.



Appendix - Methodology and Definitions

Data was collected and recorded by Dixon Hall OOTC staff on site with the support of site coordinators between November 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017.

Intake data from 7 sites during this period is still outstanding and, as such, numbers were estimated using the average of values from available data in the same category and from the same site. These site/dates are excluded altogether from the accounts of demographic intake information.

All data was entered, checked, completed, aggregated and analyzed by the Dixon Hall OOTC data coordinator.

Definitions:

Overnight guest: Any individual who completes the intake process for overnight accommodation at an OOTC site.

Dinner guest: Any individual who visits an operating OOTC site for a meal. These individuals do not complete an intake form through Dixon Hall.

Overnight guest mats: This includes all OOTC mats slept in over the stated time frame.

Unique guests: List of discrete population of individuals that have been overnight guests at an OOTC site.

Client Intervention Worker(CIW) Intakes: Interview and information collecting completed when an OOTC guest begins the process of accessing supports and services (housing, educational, health, income, et cetera) through the DH OOTC client intervention worker.

CIW Referrals: This indicates referrals made by the CIW to external supports and services (to tax clinics or mental health services, for example).

Appendix - Methodology and Definitions

Site full referrals: These are referrals made by Dixon Hall OOTC staff on site to incoming overnight guests to other shelters, Central Intake, or SHARC when they cannot be accommodated at that location. It is important to note that each site culture is different and where one site may make exceptions to capacity guidelines, another site may begin making referrals before a site is full. As such, these numbers are calculated on a weekly basis.

Available mats/Capacity: Total number of allocated overnight spaces.

Occupancy rate: Number of overnight guests relative to the number of available beds at a given site or over a specified period of time. For example, if 60 individuals complete an intake for overnight accommodation at a site with 65 available beds, the occupancy rate is 60/65 or about 92%.

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