



## Q1 2021 Violence Reduction Program Update

Item 9G

May 4, 2021

Tenant Services Committee

**Report:** TSC:2021-40

**To:** Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”)

**From:** Acting Chief Operating Officer

**Date:** April 21, 2021

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation status and performance of the Violence Reduction Program (“VRP”) for Q1 2021.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the TSC receive this report for information and refer it to the Community Safety Advisory Sub-Committee and future updates to be directed to the Community Safety Advisory Sub-Committee.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

On June 27, 2019, Toronto Community Housing’s (“TCHC”) Board of Directors directed staff to operationalize the VRP. This report provides an update on the VRP’s implementation and performance.

### BACKGROUND

TCHC provides tenant-focused services in alignment with four pillars: Community Safety and Support, Tenancy Management, Cleaning, and Maintenance.

The Community Safety and Support pillar focuses on improving safety in the community. This is achieved by working with the regions to deliver engagement and support activities, while enhancing a security presence. The VRP falls within the Community Safety and Support pillar and involves the work of integrated hub teams to support local community safety initiatives.

The VRP is focused on improving safety and security for tenants in select high needs communities. It is a response to the disproportionate frequency of violence that occurs on TCHC property, which is rooted in the levels of poverty, addiction, mental health needs and street-involvement present in the TCHC tenant population. It focuses on:

- Community Support: Economic development and community and social supports in collaboration with the City of Toronto; and
- Enhanced Security Presence & Enforcement: Dedicated and on-site Community Safety Unit (“CSU”) presence, in collaboration with Toronto Police Service (“TPS”).

## Implementation Status

### A. VRP Staffing Update

The Safer Communities Supervisors (the “Supervisors”) for each of the three regions were hired and on-boarded in March 2021. The primary role of the Supervisors will be to support the VRP Community Service Coordinators (“CSCs”) to meet the outcomes of the program, to liaise with internal and external region specific stakeholders, and to support the coordination of tasks that result from the safety audits. The recruitment process for Program Coordinators and Senior Program Leaders is underway for the Youth Violence Reduction communities so that they can support the youth engagement component of the work.

At the December 2020 TCHC Board Meeting, a decision was made to suspend all VRP FTE hiring in the Community Safety Unit. As a result, CSU will be utilizing third party security guards to fill the gaps and balance coverage at VRP sites while hiring for replacement CSU officers is on hold.

As of March 31, 2021, 23 of the 60 CSU VRP positions are vacant. 12 of those positions are from previously established VRP sites prior to the hiring suspension, and eleven are vacancies that occurred through attrition.

### B. CSC Regional Update

The VRP CSC’s are continuing to build relationships with tenants and service providers within their respective VRP communities. Some of the foundational work the team has supported includes supporting COVID-19 awareness campaigns and food security initiatives, as COVID-19 has had a disproportionately negative impact on the tenants who also need the supports provided by the VRP. As well, the team works directly with tenants to address individual needs and with community agencies and institutions to address some of the systemic issues that impact community safety.

A major challenge that has emerged in the Central and West region is relationship building with tenants during the COVID-19-19 pandemic. The CSCs in both these regions are new to the communities and in order to overcome these challenges, the teams have been supporting other initiatives, such as the vaccination roll-out and wellness checks. Additionally, they have been working with partners to help address the various food security issues that have been exacerbated by COVID-19 within their respective VRP communities. These relationship building strategies will increase the CSCs’ ability to support tenants through referrals. Despite these challenges for Q1 2021 the VRP CSC’s have:

- Referred 79 tenants to agencies or programs (e.g. employment, education and mental health programs and services);
- Supported 81 safety related initiatives (e.g. community safety meetings, audits) within VRP communities; and
- Connected with 460 tenants to provide VRP supports

Since January 2021, VRP CSCs have held two Communities of Practice (“CoP”) meetings where they were able to share their various approaches for outreach and relationship building with tenants during COVID-19, activities being used to engage and inform tenants and other community agencies about

the work of VRP, and their successes and challenges to-date. Additionally, during these CoP meetings, the VRP CSCs have been consulted on TCHC's service standards and the City's Community Safety & Wellbeing plan.

*Table 1: Regional Breakdown of CSC Activity*

Measure	West	Central	East	Q1
Total successful referrals to agencies or programs (e.g. mental health, education, employment, food security)	4	4	71	79
Total safety related initiatives supported, lead or initiated (e.g. community safety meetings, audits etc.)	7	55	19	81
Total tenants who participate in VRP/YVRP activities	210	147	103	460

Supporting the Lawrence Heights community continues to be a primary focus of the West VRP CSC team and in their efforts to do this, they continue to co-chair the LHION Safety Committee and are currently supporting the community's effort to lead a Whatsapp group intended to respond to community needs during critical incidents and keep the community connected. In other VRP communities in the West region, work is underway to support and lead interventions that respond to high rates of overdoses, community capacity to support victims of gun violence, and other antisocial behaviours. To this end the team is working to:

- Develop a strategy to support interventions focused on harm reduction, mental health, and other community safety issues that involve transient individuals who live under the bridge near 2195 Jane St.;
- Create a partnership with JVS and CultureLink to extend the activities of the 15 Tobermory Bike Hub to Grandravine in order to support youth employment and engagement; and
- Coordinate "Stop the Bleed" training for residents of communities impacted by gun violence incidents.

### **C. Youth and Family Parent Support program (\$80,000):**

Delta Family Services and the West region VRP team continue to work together to ensure that families in the North West VRP communities have access to culturally relevant parenting, system navigation, and mental health supports. To date, they have created a referral pathway that ensures TCHC tenants receive priority access once they have been referred for services. The VRP CSCs have referred three families for services to-date and the Delta team was able to reach out to the families within 48 hours. Recruitment is currently underway for facilitators for parent workshops, which are scheduled to start in the summer. Topics will include:

- Navigating the School System;
- Navigating the Criminal Justice System;
- Mental Health and Well-being;
- Technology; and
- Family Dynamics.

For the VRP CSCs in the East region, work has centred on creating connections within communities and as a result they have been able to connect with over 25 agencies and supported 15 safety initiatives within their VRP communities. The work has involved looking at ways to improve police and

community relations, supporting referrals to the FOCUS table, and engaging families with high risk young people.

Specific to the work being done in the Youth VRP (“YVRP”) communities, communities have asked for support for suicide prevention and trauma supports for young people, as one community has already lost two young people to suicide within the last six months. In order to continue to support the YVRP communities in the East region the team has:

- Hosted two virtual community safety discussions to identify safety priorities, which were attended by over 50 tenants;
- Hosted virtual drop-ins for over 15 young people that focused on sharing wellbeing and mental health supports; and
- Referred over 70 individuals to employment, mental health and food security programs and services.

The VRP CSCs in the Central region continue to focus on building relationships and have conducted outreach in communities around safety issues and initiatives, participated in Integrated Team Meetings with local staff, and are active participants in local safety network meetings with tenants and other stakeholders. The integrated team approach implemented in the Dan Harrison Community has proven to be effective in eliminating some of the communication gaps that sometimes exist between divisions. All frontline staff meet once a week and share information to support tenants and the community.

A key area of focus for this team is to work with partners to create and implement harm reduction interventions within VRP communities, as overdoses and the anti-social behaviours associated with the drug trade continue to increase within the Dundas and Sherbourne area. The team is also working to support the development of the Housing Unit Takeover (“HUT”) CoP with Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Additionally the Central VRP CSC team has also:

- Conducted surveys with over 55 tenants about safety and security and food and security;
- Participated in wellness checks and a vaccination roll out to support relationship and building rapport with tenants; and
- Provided timely and effective trauma referrals for three families who were impacted by gun violence within the central region.

#### **D. Downtown Integrated Service Delivery Program (\$50,000):**

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (“COH”) continues to move the work forward on creating a CoP on the issue of Housing Unit Takeovers. Since the start of the project, they have connected with over 45 institutions with representatives ranging from mental health and addictions to legal services. During this quarter they have:

- Completed three community consultations with TCHC and other community based organization to inform the CoP model;
- Registered 23 stakeholders for HUT training; and
- Have completed the draft community engagement plan for the delivery of tenant training.

### **Lawrence Heights Interim Safety Strategy**

Safety continues to be a major concern in the Lawrence Heights (“LH”) community. As an immediate solution to mitigate continued risks to tenants and TCHC, TCHC is finalizing an immediate enhanced safety strategy that was implemented in Q4 2020.

These short term actions will lead into a longer term community safety strategy currently being developed with the LH community, including the development of Hubs, Revitalization and continued implementation of the Violence Reduction plan, and builds on the current work being done by TCHC staff, including food security initiatives, making referrals to agencies for support, community safety promotion events and connecting with families impacted by gun violence.

The plan is based on four areas: 1) better safety coordination and long-term planning, 2) increased presence of CSU, 3) providing supports to the LH community in a sustainable manner, and 4) ensuring community groups have access to space.

### **CSU & High Needs Communities (incl. Broader Dan Harrison) Update**

The initial plan was for CSU to have a total of 60 VRP Special Constables deployed across the ten high needs communities with a mandate for community engagement, intelligence gathering, and disruption of illegal and anti-social behaviour.

The deployment of Special Constables in VRP Communities was a phased approach. However, a decision was made at the December 15, 2020 meeting to suspend all VRP FTE hiring in CSU. It was further decided that an Advisory Committee would be formed, which will include a review of the VRP program, at the March 24, 2021 TSC meeting.

In the meantime, with hiring suspended and in order to maintain some degree of coverage at VRP sites, CSU will be utilizing third party security guards to fill the current staffing gaps and balance coverage at those sites.

In addition, CSU continues to deal with attrition such as resignations and retirement, thus Special Constable vacancies created throughout VRP sites will be filled using third party security guards. These guards will fill the resource gaps and balance coverage at VRP locations.

As of March 31, 2021, there are a total of 23 CSU Special Constable vacancies in VRP sites. As G4S Security Guards are not able to travel between communities, it will take more G4S Security guards to provide coverage in lieu of the 12 vacant Special Constables positions in previously established VRP sites.

While third party security is able to provide a security presence that helps to deter crime, they are not able to provide the same level of service as Special Constables. The security guards do not carry the same authorities as a Special Constable and CSU officers still need to attend the VRP sites being covered by the security guards to address certain incidents.

Using third party security guards at these sites will incur greater costs to TCHC:

- Filling VRP Special Constable vacancies (budgeted): \$891,330.

- Filling VRP vacancies with security guards (unbudgeted): \$1,430,639; and
- Additional unbudgeted annual costs with reduced efficiency: \$539,309.

### **Performance Measurement**

For CSU activity in the high needs communities (including broader Dan Harrison), refer to Attachment 2 for additional information. Additionally, for CSU activity in VRP sites, refer to Attachment 3.

#### **A. Calls for Service**

The Q1 2021 volume of calls for service at VRP sites increased compared to last quarter, but decreased by 18% when compared to the same time last year.

#### **B. Crime on TCHC Property and CSU's intervention**

Both crime against property and crime against persons has decreased in Q1 2021 when compared to Q1 2020 by 38% and 45%, respectively. The reduction in crime is seen as positive, but typically this number fluctuates with changes in behaviour and/or people's comfort in reporting.

CSU intervened in a variety of ways to address the crime at the VRP sites through arrests, dealing with trespassers and conducting wellness checks. However, with the reduction in crime in Q1, there was also a 40% reduction in the number of arrests made and a 43% reduction in trespass incidents.

In addition, crime is addressed through the issuance of eviction notices by our Legal department. Applications to terminate a tenancy are pursued at the discretion of the Regional General Manager or Contract Property Managers as informed by legal advice. The Regional General Manager or Contract Property Manager will consider whether staff have appropriately and thoroughly applied and carried out Toronto Community Housing's policies and procedures that would remediate the issue while maintaining community safety.

The number of N6 & N7 eviction notices for Health and Safety or Illegal Acts issued in Q1 2021 increased by 18 when compared to the same time last year. During the onset of COVID-19, Legal was only able to serve a very limited number of notices from March to August 2020 and those were for non-VRP communities.

#### **C. Crime Prevention Efforts**

In an effort to reduce and prevent crime on TCHC property, particularly at the VRP sites, CSU continues to conduct safety audits and make recommendations for site staff to implement in order to make the neighbourhood a safer place. During these audits Crime Prevention through Environmental Design ("CPTED") principles are applied and CSU makes recommendations through these principles.

While CSU patrols at VRP sites increased in Q1 2021, the joint patrols with TPS decreased. Patrols help to proactively deter crime and in many cases help build relationships with tenants. These patrols consist of either on foot, mobile or both. As TPS officers are not currently allowed to proactively enforce the *Trespass to Property Act*, CSU officers will be required to increase efforts in this area.

Community Safety Advisors (“CSA”) initiate various engagement activities, of which there was a 67% increase in when compared to Q4 2020. CSA activities include community events, presentations, safety meetings, tenant management meetings, tenant visits, etc.

#### **D. Fire related incidents**

There was a reduction in actual reported fires and false fire alarms at VRP sites in Q1 2021 compared to last quarter and same quarter last year.

In 2020, six TCHC buildings located in three VRP communities were represented in the Top 20 list of false fire alarm activations (see Attachment 1). This is down from seven buildings located in five VRP communities in 2019.

#### **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:**

With the December 15, 2020 TCHC Board decision to suspend all VRP FTE CSU hiring, CSU will have to utilize third party security guards to fill the staffing gaps and balance coverage at those sites. This number increases progressively with attrition, resignations and retirement.

While third party security is able to provide a security presence that helps to deter crime, they are not able to provide the same level of service as Special Constables, and CSU Special Constables still need to attend the VRP sites being covered by the security guards to address certain incidents. This may lead to inconsistent service delivery and will incur increased third party security costs in trying to maintain proper service levels.

#### **SIGNATURE:**

*“John P. Angkaw”*

---

John P. Angkaw  
Acting Chief Operating Officer

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. False Fire Alarms and VRP Communities
2. Actions Taken in VRP Communities
3. Violence Reduction Program by Sites, Phase 1 to Phase 3

#### **STAFF CONTACTS:**

William Anderson, Senior Director, Community Safety Unit  
416-981-4116  
William.Anderson@torontohousing.ca

Nadia Gouveia, Director, Programs and Partnerships  
416 981-4090  
Nadia.Gouveia@torontohousing.ca

Mona Bottoni, Manager, Planning and Business Support  
416-981-5036  
Mona.Bottoni@torontohousing.ca

**Attachment 1: False Fire Alarm Sites & VRP Communities**

Address	Total False Alarm	VRP Community
251 SHERBOURNE ST	78	Broader Dan Harrison
200 SHERBOURNE ST	73	Broader Dan Harrison
275 SHUTER ST	66	Moss Park
200 WELLESLEY ST E	59	Bleecker / Wellesley
44 WILLOWRIDGE RD	58	
285 SHUTER ST	48	Bleecker / Wellesley
50 TUXEDO CRT	40	
4301 KINGSTON RD	39	
10 GLEN EVEREST RD	39	
250 DAVENPORT RD	38	
140 ADANAC DR	31	
101 HUMBER BLVD	31	
61 PELHAM PARK GDNS	29	
3181 EGLINTON Ave E	23	
41 D'ARCY ST	22	
365 BAY MILLS BLVD	22	
155 SHERBOURNE ST	22	Moss Park
2739 VICTORIA PARK AVE	21	
1901 WESTON RD	20	
415 WILLOWDALE AVE	20	



**Attachment 2: Actions Taken in High Needs Communities (including Dan Harrison)**  
**Q1 2020 to Q1 2021**

<b>VRP Activity</b>	<b>Q1-20</b>	<b>Q2-20</b>	<b>Q3-20</b>	<b>Q4-20</b>	<b>Jan-21</b>	<b>Feb-21</b>	<b>Mar-21</b>	<b>Q1-21</b>
<b>Request for Service (dispatched or on-site requests)</b>								
Calls for service - VRP <i>(Note: one call can have multiple incidents reported below)</i>	5890	5846	5142	5701	1713	1489	1763	4965
<b>Crime on TCHC Property</b>								
Crimes Against Property (*) - VRP	182	221	119	135	61	28	42	131
Total Crimes Against Person (CAP) - VRP	129	123	135	125	30	30	29	89
• CAP- Serious Violent Incidents -VRP	67	45	63	48	17	18	13	48
• CAP- Other Incidents - VRP	62	78	72	77	13	12	16	41
<b>Reactive Work/Intervention</b>								
Arrests VRP	164	141	130	90	38	37	42	117
• Tenant Arrest	35	31	40	29	6	7	13	26
• Non-Tenant Arrest	129	110	90	61	32	28	29	89
• Not Specified	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
N6 & N7 issued by Legal (evictions for H&S and Illegal Acts)	13	6	6	29	9	15	7	31
Wellness check (Assist Resident - Check Welfare) - VRP	826	929	342	530	183	124	123	430
Mental Health Act - VRP	22	34	30	26	11	12	8	31
Narcan Administered - VRP	0	4	3	5	0	0	0	0
Trespass Incidents -VRP	603	490	367	541	162	130	129	421
CCTV (FOI, Legal, OU. TPS) - VRP (vast majority are for TPS)	83	89	172	197	38	48	41	127

VRP Activity	Q1-20	Q2-20	Q3-20	Q4-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Q1-21
<b>Proactive Work</b>								
Safety Audits - All TCHC	0	15	27	25	2	0	0	2
Patrols - VRP								
• <i>Patrols CSU mobile/Foot/Initiated/focused</i>	3496	4456	4211	5569	1615	1733	1657	5005
• <i>Patrol - Joint CSU and TPS - VRP</i>	119	46	77	87	29	38	17	84
Engagement Activities (**)- VRP	64	37	88	70	31	47	29	107
Referrals of vulnerable tenants (***) - VRP	25	11	28	11	2	5	3	10
<b>Fire Incidents</b>								
Fire - Equipment Malfunction - VRP	9	10	13	12	3	4	3	10
False Fire Alarm VRP (accidental, perceived emergency)	201	181	148	188	51	51	69	171
Malicious Intent/Prank - VRP	12	16	10	30	3	2	5	10
Fire - VRP	32	33	23	41	7	4	8	19

\* In 2020 Arsons and Mischiefs are being included in the Crimes against Property number. Therefore numbers for 2020 will be greater than previous years as they were inadvertently excluded.

\*\* Engagement includes reported CSA Activity Only; community events, presentations, critical incident response, safety meetings, tenant management meetings, tenant visits.

\*\*\* Tenant Referrals are counted through a reporting application used by our CSA's. Tenants may be referred to Inside or outside agencies.

Calls for Service - Calls for service are reported by counting distinct CORA report numbers generated when a call for service is received, when officers on site respond to complaints and incidents and generate a CORA report, or otherwise entered by the dispatcher as a call for service.

**Attachment 3: Violence Reduction Program by Sites, Phase 1 to Phase 3**

Community	Start of VRP			Phase 1			Phase 2			Phase 3		
	April 1 2019 - September 4 2019			September 5 2019 – January 26 2020			January 27 2020 – February 28 2021			March 1 – 31 2021		
	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response
Bleecker/200 Wellesley	18	94	104	213	563	231	174	817	239	84	661	206
Dan Harrison / William Dennison	323	649	382	183	756	212	81	723	171	52	519	142
Edgeley Village	1	59	11	1	52	8	3	328	6	3	642	13
Flemingdon Park/Glenyan Manor	2	33	10	3	60	13	17	29	14	10	16	3
Islington/St. Andrews	1	25	3	1	7	6	2	7	2	-	10	10
Jane/Falstaff	3	186	41	26	377	102	43	389	56	6	626	10
Lawrence	3	281	89	129	658	146	118	850	86	81	719	68

Community	Start of VRP			Phase 1			Phase 2			Phase 3		
	April 1 2019 - September 4 2019			September 5 2019 – January 26 2020			January 27 2020 – February 28 2021			March 1 – 31 2021		
	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response	Assist Resident - Check Welfare	Self Initiated Patrols	Incident Requiring Response
Lawrence Heights	2	92	20	1	74	17	6	536	20	-	1,455	19
Moss Park	7	233	152	18	127	117	133	719	168	135	432	103
Regent Park/Gerrard River	13	226	67	15	113	63	107	619	77	26	577	68
Victoria Park/Chester Le Blvd	-	137	6	-	103	3	1	131	7	-	129	6
<b>Total (per 100 days)</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>2,890</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>5,149</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>5,787</b>	<b>648</b>