

Respite and Warming Centres

Locations & Capacity: Winter 2019/20 & Winter 2020/21

Learn more about this project:

[Changes in informal access to selected indoor public spaces in Toronto](#)

What these maps capture

All city-funded 24-hour respite and warming centres for the winters of 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Quick information

- There is a severe lack of access to public, indoor space in the winter of 2020/21, even during cold weather alerts.¹
- While the situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic, the lack of safe, accessible, indoor space in Toronto, in particular during the winter, is a longstanding issue.²
- In 2019/20, respite and warming centres had a combined capacity of 514. In 2020/21, they had a combined capacity of approximately 319, a reduction of approximately 40 per cent.³
- The City's 2020/21 Winter plan stated that it would be providing 221 spaces at six different respite centres. On the night of January 25, 2021 the City's shelter census listed 183 respite spaces in total. On the night of January 31, this number dropped to 174 spaces.³
- Most areas of the city do not have respite or warming centres. According to the City's shelter census, on the night of January 31 2021, both respite and warming centres were at 98 per cent capacity, with some individual sites at or above 100 per cent capacity.

About respite centres

In January 2020/21, the City had six respite centres, with a combined capacity of approximately 174.³ In 2019/20, there were seven respite centres, with a combined capacity of 464.³ Respite centres are always open. In City documents, respite centres are described as prioritizing, "ease of access to safe indoor space." It seems, however, that at least some are operating similarly to bedded programs, with many spaces accessed through phone call booking. As a result, there may be less "ease of access to safe indoor space" than indicated in the Winter Plan. According to the City's shelter census on January 31 2021, respites were at 98 per cent capacity, with three spots available city-wide.

Warming centres

In January 2020/21, the City had four warming centres, with a combined capacity of between 130 and 145 people.⁴ In 2019/20, there was one warming centre, with a capacity of 50 people. Warming centres are open only when an extreme cold weather alert is called, or when the City otherwise deems it appropriate to do so. The current threshold for a cold weather alert is -15.

On the night of January 31 2021, warming centres were at 98 per cent capacity, with three spots available city wide.

Data sources for map

- Data for 2019/20 taken from City of Toronto 2019/20 Winter Plan for People Experiencing Homelessness (<https://wx.toronto.ca/inter/it/newsrel.nsf/11476e3d3711f56e85256616006b891f/a12733be914680b4852584aa007644f7?OpenDocument>).
- Data for 2020/21 taken from City of Toronto 2020/21 Winter Plan for People Experiencing Homelessness (<https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-2020-2021-winter-plan-for-people-experiencing-homelessness>) and the City's Daily Shelter Census for January 25, 27 and 31, 2020 (<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/shelter-census/>).

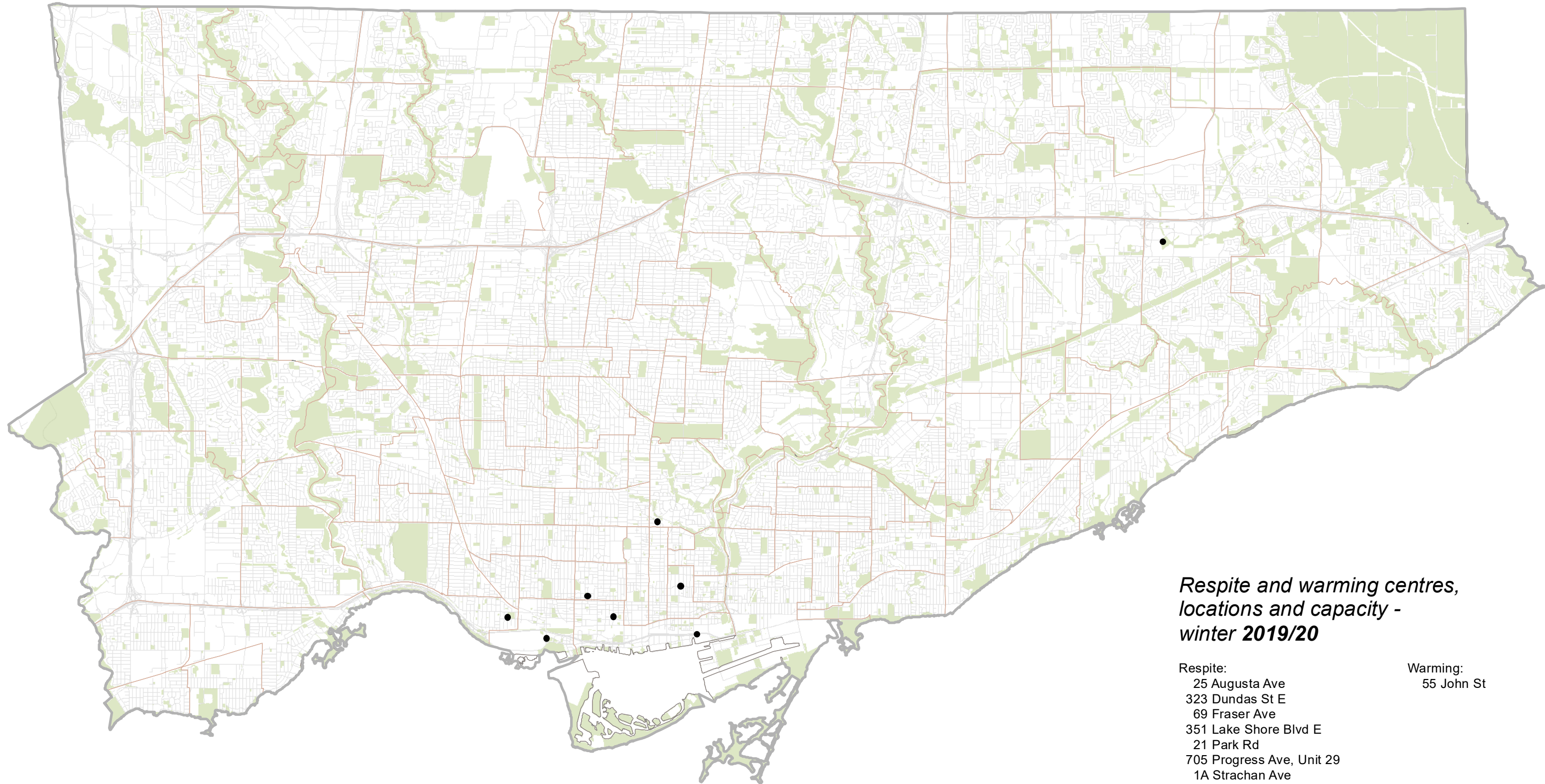
Notes

1. Community groups estimate that well over 1,000 people are currently sleeping outside, while shelters are full or close to capacity. The 2020/21 Winter Plan for People Experiencing Homelessness states that the City will add between 560, 620 or 680 new spaces between November and April 2021, depending on the source. Even if all these spaces become available by February 2021—this leaves hundreds without access to shelter or indoor space, in particular overnight. At the same time, most public indoor spaces are currently closed or offering very limited access. Details for the numbers above:
 - Community groups estimate that well over 1,000 people are living outside in Toronto (<https://right2housingto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/R2HTO-Encampents-Rights-Review-final.pdf>; <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/city-legal-action-toronto-carpenter-toronto-tiny-shelters-unhoused-people-1.5811589>; <https://globalnews.ca/news/7383291/toronto-homeless-centre-plastic-barriers>).
 - The Oct. 6 press release for the City's Winter Plan states that the City will add 560 new spaces between November and April 2020 (<https://www.toronto.ca/news/torontos-2020-2021-winter-plan-for-people-experiencing-homelessness-includes-more-spaces-and-enhanced-street-outreach>). The linked fact sheet states that the City will add 620 new spaces during this same time period. (<https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-2020-2021-winter-plan-for-people-experiencing-homelessness>). The Winter Services plan states that 680 new spaces will be added: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/homeless-help/winter-services-plan-for-people-experiencing-homelessness/>
 - Between November 3 and November 17, an average of 38 people a night were turned away from the shelter system (<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-158747.pdf>, p. 8).

2. www.maphealth.ca/homeless-cold-injury-toronto/
3. The combined capacity for respite centres listed in the City's 2020/21 Winter Plan is significantly higher than the combined capacity for respite spaces listed in the daily shelter census in late January. For the map and for this fact sheet, we used the capacity listed in the Jan. 31 2021 daily census, as this was the most current information at the time the maps were produced. The 2019/20 figures, however, were taken from the City's 2019/20 Winter Plan.

We focused on respite centres as they are meant to prioritize “ease of access to safe indoor space.” (<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/9522-housing-homlessness-services-glossary.pdf>) We used respites as defined on the daily shelter census. The spaces available at Better Living Centre (BLC) are sometimes referred to as “respite spaces.” However, in the City shelter census the BLC is referred to as a “response site.” As a result, we have not included the spaces in the BLC as part of the respite system. We do include the spaces opened up in the BLC as a warming centre during cold weather alerts.

4. The combined capacity for warming centres is listed in the City's 2020/21 Winter Plan as 150 spaces. In January's daily shelter census, capacity fluctuates between 130 and 145 spaces. For the map and for this fact sheet, we used the capacity listed in the Jan. 31 2021 daily census, as this was the most current information at the time the maps were produced.



Respite and warming centres, locations and capacity - winter 2019/20

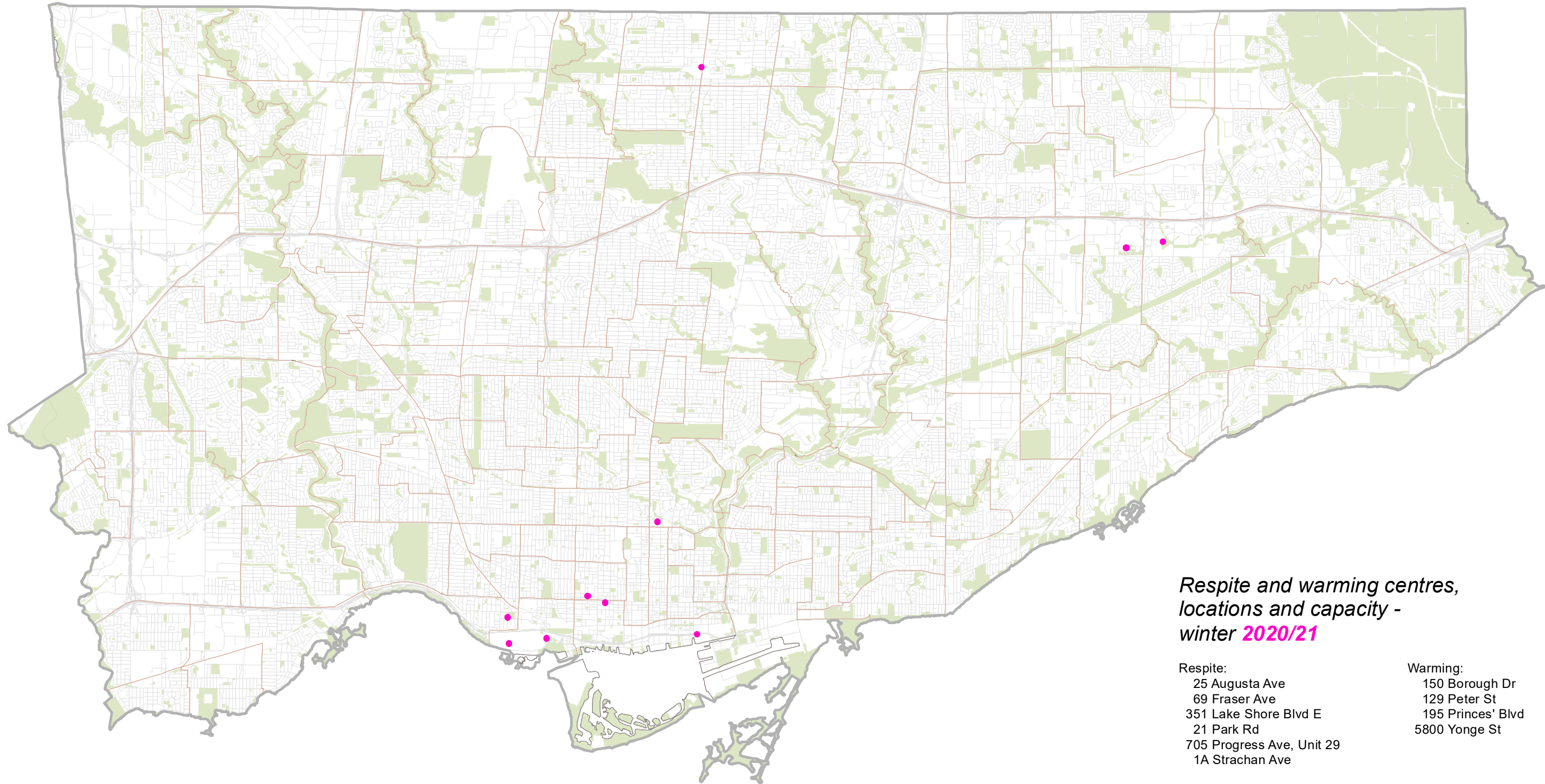
Respite:
 25 Augusta Ave
 323 Dundas St E
 69 Fraser Ave
 351 Lake Shore Blvd E
 21 Park Rd
 705 Progress Ave, Unit 29
 1A Strachan Ave

Warming:
 55 John St

Combined capacity: **514**

● Locations
 — Street Grid
 □ Neighbourhood Boundaries
 ■ Green Space

- (1) What this map captures: All City respites and warming centres. While some of these services now operate more like bedded programs, and require a call in advance, they were all originally intended to provide what the City frames as "low-barrier" access to indoor space. For details, please see fact sheet.
- (2) Data snapshot taken Jan 25, 2021. For data sources, please see fact sheet.
- (3) This map is not intended as a resource and will not be updated. Please verify locations and availability of spaces, as the service matrix changes quickly.



Respite and warming centres, locations and capacity - winter 2020/21

Respite:	Warming:
25 Augusta Ave	150 Borough Dr
69 Fraser Ave	129 Peter St
351 Lake Shore Blvd E	195 Princes' Blvd
21 Park Rd	5800 Yonge St
705 Progress Ave, Unit 29	
1A Strachan Ave	

Combined capacity: 319

- Locations
- Street Grid
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- Green Space

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