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PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES OF YORK REGION REPORT ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN THE 905

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends that:

- 1. The presentation by Marg Campell, Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region re: “Report on Youth Homelessness in the 905” be received**
- 2. That the recommendation contained in the following report, April 28, 2004, from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing be adopted**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The following report be received for information by Committee and Council.

2. PURPOSE

This report is presented to Committee and Council to inform them of the research completed by Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region on youth homelessness in York Region (*see Attachment 1*). This project was funded through the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative fund (SCPI) which is a Federal fund managed by the Region on behalf of the community.

3. BACKGROUND

In March 2002, Pathways for Children Youth and Families of York Region’s “Home Base” Youth Drop-in Centre in Richmond Hill received Federal SCPI funding of \$37,400 under the auspices of the Region to conduct a research project “Best Practices for Youth Drop-in Centres”.

Pathways engaged Dr. Dan Offord and his associate of the Centre for Studies for Children at Risk through Chedoke-McMaster University to conduct the research.

The purpose of the research was to understand the full range of needs for homeless youth. The age of the client groups targeted were youth, 13 to 24 years of age.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The findings of the Pathway's research are consistent with the findings of the Region's 2001 Emergency Shelter Study and with the preliminary findings of our Homelessness Evaluation currently being done, identifying the need for services and supports for youth in York Region. The results and recommendations of the Pathway's research will go beyond "Home Base" and will assist other service agencies in York Region in planning and implementing programs to address the needs of youth.

The research identifies that the youth at the Centre are significantly at-risk of becoming homeless or are currently homeless and require a multi-service approach to meet their needs.

Approximately half of the 69 youth interviewed indicated that they had been without permanent residence for at least a few days in the last 12 months and about half had spent at least one night outside at some point when they had left home.

Although a large portion of the 69 youth interviewed live with parents or guardians, they indicated background factors and/or behaviours that are consistent within homeless youth, such as:

- A high percentage of the youth used drugs and alcohol in the last 12 months.
- A high percentage of the youth had police contact and more than half had been arrested or taken into police custody.
- More than half are at risk for mental health issues.
- About a quarter of the youth reported frequently seeing their parents intoxicated.
- More than half have used the services at "Home Base" in the past year and used the services on a weekly basis.

Respondents identified the three most important elements as:

- 1) A place to stay off the streets
- 2) Food
- 3) Counselling.

The top three requested services were:

- 1) Extended hours
- 2) A shelter in Richmond Hill
- 3) Addictions counselling (62.3%).

There is a general need for additional emergency shelter facilities for youth throughout the Region. These additional facilities should provide easy access to transportation, support (such as counselling) and linkages to services (such as substance abuse), mental health and harm reduction programs.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Region has made a commitment to support safe, caring and healthy communities and to maintain and promote a high quality of life. This includes having a broad range of

organizations working and planning together, including police forces, schools, businesses, housing providers, hospitals, social service providers, public health agencies, recreation facilities and non-profit, and voluntary and business groups.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. However, the issue of youth homelessness and at-risk youth is an unfortunate reality in York Region and one whose best solution is prevention.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The results and recommendations of the research will provide benefits to service agencies throughout York Region in their planning and implementation of programs and youth services to address youth issues and needs in their respective communities.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research are consistent with the findings of the Region's 2001 Emergency Shelter Study and with the preliminary findings of our Homelessness Evaluation. The Region and service agencies will be able to use this document to make more informed decisions on service needs and issues specific to homelessness and at-risk youth.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing has been forwarded to each Member of Council with the May 12, 2004 Community Services and Housing Committee agenda and a copy thereof is on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk)