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EMERGENCY SHELTER AND SEASONAL HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS IN YORK REGION

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, October 2, 2007, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services with the following additional recommendation:

- 2. This report be circulated to the appropriate Federal and Provincial Ministers requesting a new funding formula and copied to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario for information.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report informs Council of York Region's emergency shelter and seasonal homelessness services, the usage of these services, emerging issues, and service needs.

3. BACKGROUND

The Community and Health Services Department actively works with, and provides funding for, emergency shelter and seasonal homelessness programs in York Region.

3.1 Four emergency shelters provide temporary shelter to homeless individuals, families, and youth

The Region has purchase of service agreements with two operators, Transitional and Supportive Housing Services of York Region and The Governing Council of the Salvation Army in Canada, to operate four emergency shelters that currently provide a total of 75 shelter beds. The number of beds is expected to increase to 115 with planned expansion over the next year. See Table 1 for service descriptions and number of beds by shelter. Operators receive a per diem of \$40.75 for board, lodging, and administration. The per diem is cost shared 80:20 with the Province.

Table 1
Emergency Shelter Services in York Region

Shelter	Service Description
Newmarket Youth Shelter Gorham Street Town of Newmarket	Provides 10 beds for males between the ages of 16–26 years. Youth may reside at the shelter for up to four months.
Leeder Place Yonge Street Town of East Gwillimbury	Currently provides 20 beds for one- or two-parent families. The shelter is in the process of extending the number of beds to 60. The family may reside at the shelter for up to six weeks.
Porter Place Yonge Street, Town of East Gwillimbury	Provides 29 beds for single males. Individuals may reside at the shelter for up to six weeks.
Sutton Youth Shelter Dalton Road Town of Georgina	Provides 16 beds for male and female youth between the ages of 16–26 years. Youth may reside at the shelter for up to four months. Also offers 10 transitional beds for youth who are seeking more permanent housing while in full-time school, training or employment. The length of stay in a transitional bed is up to one year.

In addition to providing board and lodging, emergency shelters provide assistance to individuals and families to locate to permanent housing and referrals to addiction, mental health, parenting, anger management and other critical support services.

3.2 Emergency shelter usage is increasing

In 2006, 1,682 individuals used shelter beds. In 2007, more than 2,000 persons will occupy a shelter bed (based on a projection utilizing the first five months of usage in 2007).

York Region shelters routinely run at high occupancy levels. Table 2 provides a summary of occupancy rates for 2006–2007.

Table 2
Emergency Shelter Occupancy Rates 2006–2007

Shelter	No. of Beds	2006	2007*
Porter Place	29	100%	98%
Newmarket Youth Shelter	10	104%	106%
Leeder Place	20	91%	83%
Sutton Youth Shelter	16	55%	73%

* Projected year-end occupancy based on year-to-date actuals

The Sutton Youth Shelter opened in March 2006. Occupancy has increased as youth establish a level of trust with the facility and, as a result, the occupancy rate has continued to grow. From January 2007 to June 2007, the shelter has operated at an average capacity of just under 75%.

3.3 Seasonal homelessness programs provide additional winter shelter

Two seasonal programs provide critical additional shelter and supports to homeless individuals and families during the winter months.

Inn from the Cold

The Inn from the Cold, located at Trinity United Church in the Town of Newmarket, is largely run by volunteers. It is open to males and females 16 years of age and older, Thursday to Sunday from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. The Program is also open to the homeless when the temperature falls below minus 15 degrees. The Inn from the Cold program has been in operation since 2004 providing light meals, clothing and up to 20 overnight spaces from December to the end of March.

The Community and Health Services Department funds this program through the Community Development Investment Fund and the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative.

Inn from the Cold has recently incorporated and is seeking sustainable funding from alternate sources.

Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold

The Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold is operated by four faith groups, Temple Har Zion, St. Luke's Catholic Church, Jaffari As-Sadiq Islamic and Thornhill United Church, each generally running two nights per week during the winter. The Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold has been providing meals, clothing, up to 25 overnight spaces, breakfast, bag lunches and social activities in the south part of the Region since 1998.

Funding sources, including Community Development Investment Fund and the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, have supported the program to provide minor capital, research, and program development.

Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold has incorporated as a non-profit charitable corporation and is actively seeking long-term funding partnerships. It is anticipated that Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold will be joined this season by new faith communities offering programs in the Town of Richmond Hill.

Table 3 shows the usage in the Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold and the Inn from the Cold programs during the 2006/2007 winter period.

Table 3
Seasonal Homelessness Winter Period (2006/2007) Usage

Program	Overnight Spaces	Number of Overnight Guests	Number of Individuals Served
Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold	25	644	1,375*
Inn from the Cold	20	745	745

* Many guests at Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold attend only for dinner and social activities.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Shelter residents include singles, families, seniors and the employed

The traditional profile of a shelter resident is no longer the single male who is unemployed. Individuals and families now use emergency shelters for reasons including loss of employment, or despite working, inadequate income to make ends meet, lack of money for rent, lack of affordable housing, addictions (alcohol, drugs and gambling), mental health and other issues. Individuals using shelter services may also include seniors with low pension incomes and unstable housing.

Overall, today's shelter user encounters more barriers and has more complex needs.

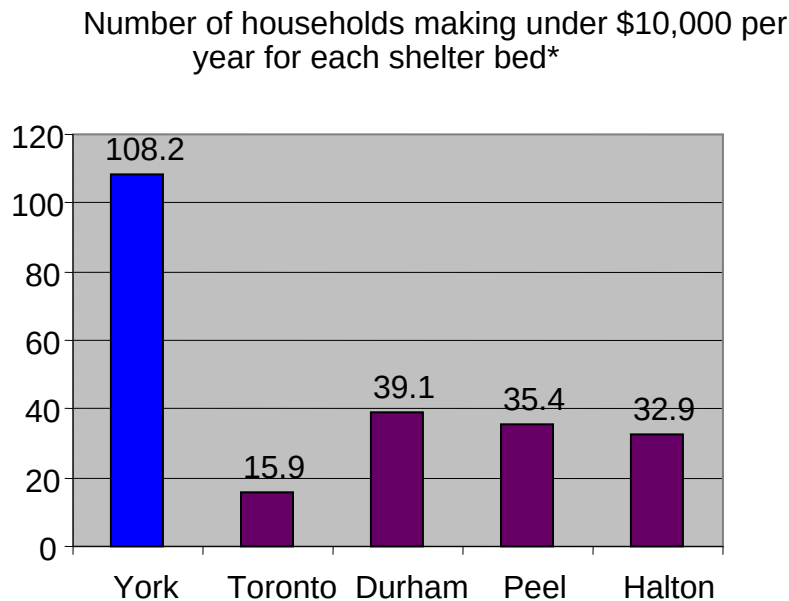
4.2 Shortage of shelter beds

As the Region continues to grow, the numbers of households who may experience periods of homelessness is also increasing. In the absence of affordable housing programs funded by senior levels of government, accommodation for low-income individuals and families is scarce. As reported in *Housing by the Numbers*, a paper presented to Council in April 2007, the Region has:

- The lowest rental vacancy rate in the Greater Toronto Area.
- The lowest ratio of rental to owned housing units.

- The highest ratio of low income households to social housing units.

There are insufficient emergency shelter beds to respond to the needs of the Region's population. *Housing by the Numbers* illustrated this deficiency with the following graph, which utilizes 2001 Statistics Canada information and municipal shelter bed data and shows the Region has the highest number of households at high risk for homelessness based on an analysis of the number of low income households per shelter bed.



* Based on 2005 shelter information by municipality

In 2005, York had 59 shelter beds (prior to the opening of the Sutton Youth Shelter), compared to 4,181 in the City of Toronto, 136 in the Region of Durham, 303 in the Region of Peel and 83 in the Region of Halton.

4.3 Lack of emergency shelter for women

In April 2007, the Community Services and Housing Committee was provided with information about a recent study by the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness focusing on the need for emergency shelter for homeless single women. Until recently, the Yellow Brick House and Sandgate women's shelters were able to serve homeless single women when beds were available. This option ended when the Ministry of Community and Social Services began enforcing the shelters' mandate to serve only victims of domestic abuse. The study concluded that:

- There is a lack of support for homeless and at risk women who experience mental illness, substance abuse and other issues, including violence.
- Inadequate access to transportation hinders women looking for housing and services.

- There are barriers to establishing an emergency shelter for single women, especially inadequate operating funding.

4.4 Lack of emergency shelter services in south

All of the current permanent shelter services in the Region are located in the northern half of the Region while the population is concentrated in the three southern municipalities.

4.5 Provincial funding model does not currently support shelter development and sustainability

Municipalities across the Province face challenges in developing new emergency shelter services. As a result, an Ontario Municipal Social Services Association task force was formed to look at this issue and provide recommendations to the Province. Community and Health Services Department staff participated in this work. In 2006, upon conclusion of their work, the Task Force reported that the current provincial funding model is both inappropriate and inadequate to sustain shelter operations due to low provincial cost shared per diem funding rates which discourage shelter development.

The Ontario Municipal Services Association's report was the subject of a Council report titled *Summary of Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Emergency Hostel Task Force Report*, approved by Council on June 22, 2006 through the adoption of Clause No. 2 of Report No. 5 of the Community Services and Housing Committee.

Regional Council supported, in principle, the main findings and recommendations of the report which focused on increased funding. In addition, York Region's report was forwarded to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, and local MPPs. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services wrote to the Deputy Minister of Community and Social Services requesting the Province take immediate action to increase provincial per diem funding to address mounting financial pressures highlighted in the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association report. While the Province has increased the per diem amounts by 2% in 2006 and 2% in 2007, they have not acted on the report's recommended increases. Staff plan to continue to work with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and other organizations in support of continued research, option development, and advocacy on these important issues.

In addition to the funding issues outlined above, establishing new shelters, particularly in the south end of the Region, is very difficult due to high land costs and finding appropriate space within the communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2007 approved budget for the permanent emergency shelters totals approximately \$2.3 million gross. The Province will contribute approximately \$1.4 million, as their 80% share of the per diem payments to agencies and personal needs allowances for clients.

The regional tax levy component is \$0.9 million, consisting of the Region's 20% share of the per diem payments to agencies and personal needs allowances for clients, as well as \$500,000 in 100% municipal stabilization funding outside of the 80:20 cost sharing to support agencies as a result of inadequate provincial per diem rates. Analysis shows that when all of York Region's contributions are factored into the overall budget, the Province is providing 61% of the total funding required, well short of the 80:20 formula.

Short term support for the two seasonal programs has been provided intermittently by the Region's homelessness initiatives such as the Community Development Investment Fund and the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. For example, Inn from the Cold has a Community Development Investment Fund commitment of \$25,080 for 2007. Both programs also frequently take advantage of the "Winter Needs" proposal call for funds to purchase equipment and supplies for homelessness projects which is issued each fall, budget permitting.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities benefit from emergency shelter and seasonal homelessness services that assist our most vulnerable residents including working families, youth and seniors in the community.

7. CONCLUSION

This report describes the range of emergency shelter and seasonal homelessness services available in the Region and current usage. Based on gaps in service, funding issues, rapid population growth and the changing profile of emergency shelter users, it is evident that there are inadequacies in the current shelter system. The issues need to be addressed with the support of senior levels of government and active community involvement in order to find and establish an effective response to the increasing pressures identified here.

For more information on this report contact David Rennie, Director of Employment and Financial Support, or Sylvia Patterson, Director of Housing Services, of the Community and Health Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.