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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Health & Social Services Committee
From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health and Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2024-MOH-1
Date: February 8, 2024

Subject:

Primary Care Outreach Program

Recommendations:

That the Health & Social Services Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the Region of Durham advocates for the provincial government to provide sustained provincial funding for the expansion of the Primary Care Outreach Program to meet the growing needs of Durham Region residents experiencing homelessness and needing urgent health care, mental health and addictions support;
 - B) That a letter from the Regional Chair on behalf of Regional Council, along with a copy of this report be sent to the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Health, Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions, all Durham MPPs, and AMO, for their information and consideration.
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Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP) and seek Regional Council approval to advocate for ongoing provincial funding to expand PCOP to meet the growing needs of local residents experiencing homelessness and needing urgent health care, mental health and addictions support.

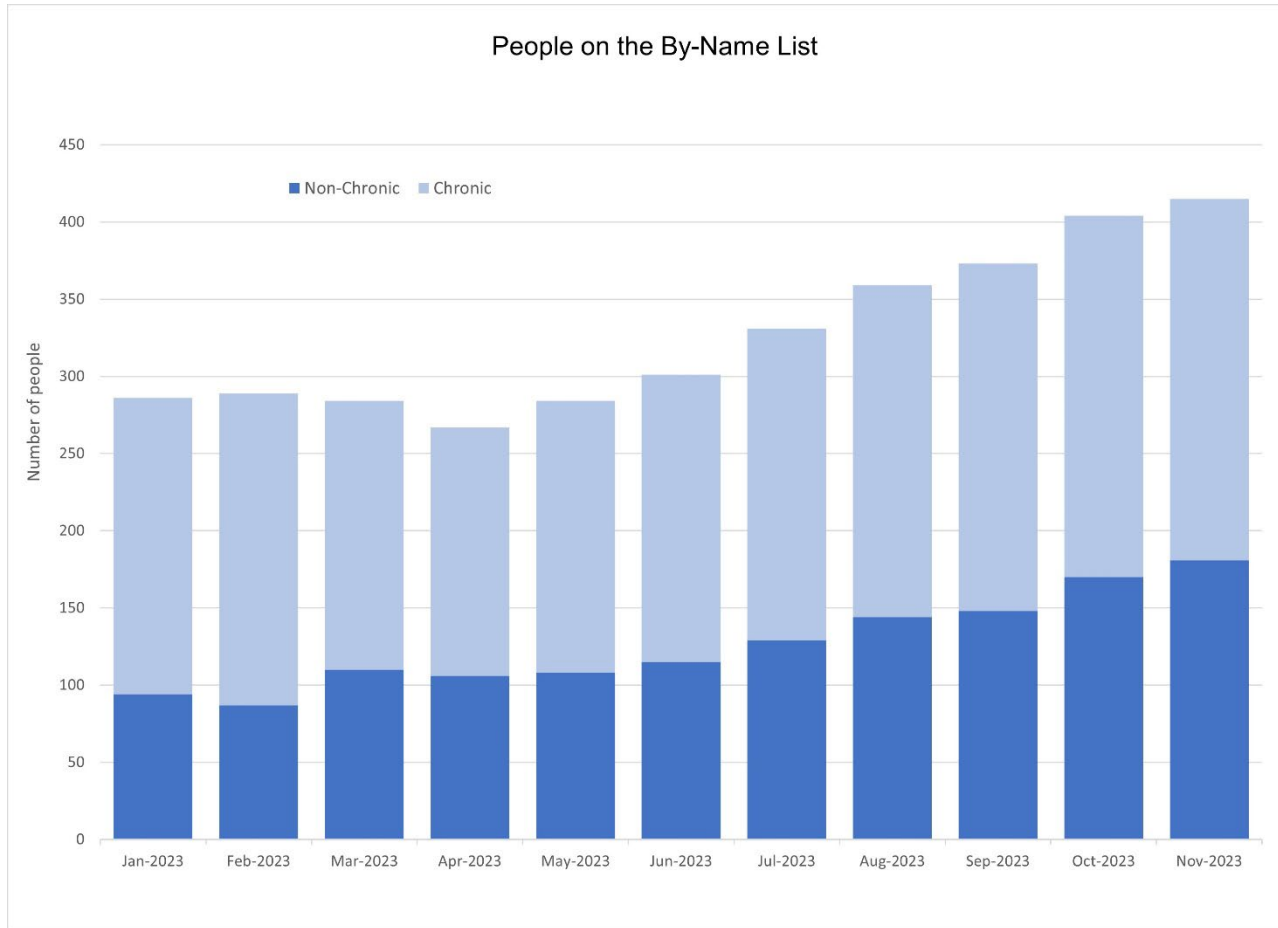
2. Background

- 2.1 PCOP began operation on July 23, 2018 and consists of an Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) and Social Worker providing outreach services and service navigation/connection to vulnerable priority populations including those who are homeless/underhoused or have mental health and addiction challenges.
- 2.2 PCOP addresses the health and social service needs of hard-to-reach populations with complex needs by: addressing urgent health needs and supporting individuals in crisis; supporting individuals to get help for physical and mental health issues and substance use; assisting with ongoing connections to physical and mental health services; and supporting transitions to more stable housing.
- 2.3 The ACP provides assessments, triage and interventions including: administration of anti-psychotic injections; blood glucose tests for diabetic clients; medical counselling; referrals to medical facilities or the on-site physician at Mission United Medical; service navigation by referring clients with addictions and mental and/or physical health issues to appropriate agencies and supports; urgent care such as intravenous treatment, and; wound care.
- 2.4 The Social Worker provides engagement, assessment/triage, counselling (for crises, depression, substance abuse, suicidality, trauma, and other mental health issues), and service navigation by referring clients to appropriate agencies and supports for addictions, food, housing, and mental and/or physical health issues.
- 2.5 The PCOP team uses a rapid response vehicle to commute to various priority neighbourhoods and provides primary care and social work services seven days a week from 8 am to 6 pm. PCOP hours were expanded in May 2023 to meet the growing demand for services.
- 2.6 A key aspect of PCOP is engaging with clients, building trust, and following up on previous referrals to maintain clients' connections with supports. A significant amount of the team's time is spent on engaging with clients which is fundamental to the success of the program.

3. Current Status

- 3.1 The By-Name List is a real-time, up-to-date list of people known to be experiencing homelessness. As of November 2023, there are at least 415 people who are currently experiencing homelessness in Durham. Over the past year, the number of individuals on the By-Name list has continued to increase (see Image 1). Of these individuals, 234 people have been experiencing homelessness for six months or longer.

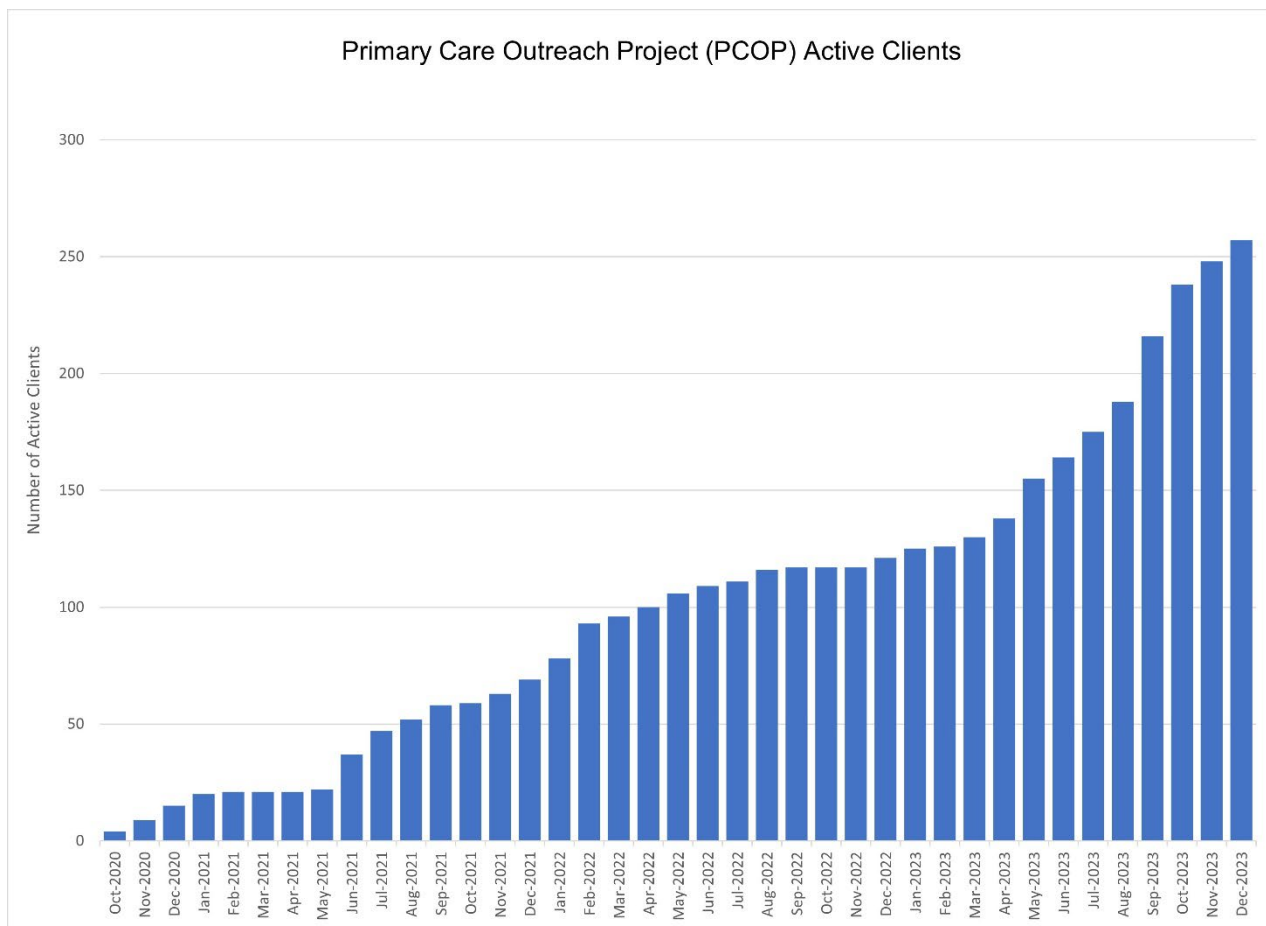
Image I: People on the By-Name List



3.2 The PCOP team (including the ACP and Social Worker) had 2,279 encounters with clients in 2023. It is estimated that 553 unique clients received service.

3.3 Over the past few years, the number of active clients that received services from the ACP as part of the PCOP team has been steadily increasing. As of December 2023, Region of Durham Paramedic Services (RDPS) had 263 active clients in PCOP that had received medical care by the ACP (see Image II). Clients may be seen many times throughout the year, as needed. The average repeat visits for active clients in 2023 was 4.8 visits per client.

Image II: PCOP Active Clients



- 3.4 In most cases, the medical care that is provided to clients through PCOP is the only medical care available for these clients. As the number of people experiencing homelessness continues to increase, so do needs for medical care. Through ongoing engagement, clients develop a sense of comfort, familiarity and safety with PCOP staff and are more receptive to receiving medical care.
- 3.5 In addition to PCOP, there are several local services that provide outreach and homelessness supports, mental health and addictions support to local residents (see attachment 1). However, these programs do not provide the medical support that the PCOP ACPs are trained to provide. Table 1 shows the number and reason for PCOP ACP interventions in 2023.

Table 1: PCOP Client Medical Interventions January 1, 2023 to December 19, 2023

Medical Intervention	Number of Interventions	Increase in the past six months (%)
Nurse Practitioner/Physician Consultations	141	99%
Wound Care	301	198%
Bactigras Dressings Used	70	218%
Inadine Non-Adherent Dressings Used	157	157%
Urine Drug Screens	60	58%
Pregnancy Tests	6	100%
Anti-Psychotic Injections (Abilify)	34	278%
Medication Assist Prompts	143	151%

- 3.6 The increase in PCOP clients and medical interventions demonstrates the need to expand PCOP and address medical needs of those experiencing homelessness.
- 3.7 PCOP staff may see clients that are frequent callers to 911, however, frequent callers to 911 also include individuals with fixed addresses with various medical issues, including chronic conditions. The Community Paramedicine Program, funded by both the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, has been implemented to help ease pressures on hospitals, community care, paramedic call volumes, and long-term care home waitlists. RDPS has identified that the number of calls to 911 from frequent callers within any month in 2023 (i.e., individuals that called 911 three or more times in any month) ranged from 288 to 435 (excluding December as data were not complete at the time of analysis). RDPS continues to advocate for legislative measures and ongoing provincial funding for community paramedicine.

4. Funding

- 4.1 The PCOP budget as outlined in the approved 2023 Health Department Business Plans & Budget is \$754k. The forecasted 2023 expenditures are \$800k.
- 4.2 Staffing for PCOP includes two full-time ACPs and two full-time Social Workers. Additionally, three paramedics are available to backfill in case of absences and training days.
- 4.3 The 2023 PCOP forecasted expenditures are as follows:

Staffing – RDPS	\$380k
Staffing – Social Services	\$289k
Education & Training - RDPS	\$42k
Education & Training – Social Services	\$6k
Vehicle Costs (i.e., maintenance, fuel and replacement)	\$40k
Program Materials and Medical Supplies	\$18k
Professional Consulting (e.g., medical professionals that provide support for wound care, addictions and mental health)	\$25k
Total Forecasted Expenditures	\$800k

- 4.4 Additional funding is needed to expand the program, including additional staff and vehicles to support the growing homeless population in all municipalities which needs medical care and support.
- 4.5 As shown in Table 1, the most medical interventions in 2023 were related to wound care and these needs continue to increase. Wounds must be cared for in a location that is sheltered and private both for patient privacy as well as shelter from any adverse weather conditions (e.g., extreme heat or cold). An ambulance rather than the existing rapid response vehicle is required so that the PCOP ACP can tend to wounds in a private, safe and appropriate space.
- 4.6 RDPS will repurpose an existing fleet ambulance for PCOP to provide wound care to clients. The repurposed ambulance will have minimal cost impacts related to fuel and vehicle maintenance. These costs will be addressed in the 2024 Health Department Business Plans and Budget.
- 4.7 Currently PCOP does not receive any provincial funding.

5. Previous Reports

- 5.1 Report [2019-INFO-5](#) provided an update on the implementation of PCOP.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goal and priority in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Goal 2: Community Vitality: Enhance community safety and well-being.

- b. Goal 5: Service Excellence: Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 As Durham Region continues to experience a growing population that is experiencing homelessness, medical care needs of this population are also increasing.
- 7.2 PCOP has seen a steady increase in active clients since 2020.
- 7.3 Current PCOP program resources are no longer sufficient to address the growing medical support needs of those experiencing homelessness. Resources are required to expand services across the region and expand hours of service.
- 7.4 Regional Council advocacy for ongoing provincial funding to expand PCOP to meet the growing needs of local residents experiencing homelessness and needing urgent health care, mental health and addictions support will ensure that programming is well positioned to respond to emerging health needs of Durham residents.

8. Attachment

Attachment #1: Key Homelessness Supports and Mental Health and Addictions Services in Durham Region

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

R.J. Kyle, BSc, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC, FACPM
Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health

Original signed by

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou
Commissioner of Social Services

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment #1 Key Homelessness Supports and Mental Health and Addictions Services in Durham Region

211 Ontario:

- Connects individuals to social services and community programs including mental health and addiction, homelessness, health care, housing, newcomers, youth, older adults, employment assistance, abuse, emergency/crisis etc.

AIDS Committee of Durham Region:

- Provides naloxone and naloxone training, harm reduction services, fentanyl drug test kits, counselling, outreach, peer support, and equipment/supply clean-up.

Back Door Mission:

- Mission United provides wrap-around support services to individuals in Durham Region who are dealing with homelessness, housing insecurity, mental health and addiction concerns, and food access challenges.

Canadian Mental Health Association Durham:

- Community mental health services including nurse practitioner-led clinic and assertive community treatment team for people 18 to 65 with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

Community Care Durham:

- Community Care Durham (CCD) is a multi-service registered charitable organization providing a broad range of support services for individuals over the age of 16 including mental health supports, food security programming, health and wellness etc.

Connex Ontario:

- Ontario-wide information and referral for people experiencing mental health and/or addiction issues. Service is provided 24/7/365 by toll-free telephone, email, text, or web chat. Funded by the Government of Ontario.

Coordinated Access System:

- Coordinated Access is a process that helps people experiencing homelessness get help in a coordinated, standardized way. In a Coordinated Access System, service providers use a shared information system and work together to triage, assess and prioritize people consistently to get support.

COPE Mental Health | Community Care Durham:

- Community-based program that supports adults with mental health concerns to live in their community. The goal is to assist adults aged 16 and up with emotional or mental health concerns to remain in the community and function as effectively as possible while maximizing their quality of life.

Cornerstone:

- 24-hour emergency shelter to men aged 16 years and above who are currently homeless – max. 7 day stay.
- Services include assistance securing a source of income, housing search, referrals to community resources, mental health support and referral, crisis supports, and identification replacement.

Distress Centre Ontario:

- Offers 24-hour text/live talk helpline, crisis call-out program, community contact call-out program, suicide survivor support groups, community training/education.

Durham Community Health Centre:

- Offers services and programs addressing mental health including a walk-in counselling clinic for children and youth ages 3 to 19 years and their families, and brief counselling services (6-12 sessions) to individuals, families, and couples.

Durham Mental Health Services:

- Short term crisis beds, 24-hour crisis line, residential programs, housing support, community outreach programs including mobile crisis team, justice initiatives, seniors support.
- Services individuals 16 years and above with a history of mental illness.

Durham Region Outreach Workers:

- An engagement team that seeks people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with the goal of developing trust, meeting basic needs, and ensuring people are connected with Durham's By-Name List and coordinated access system.
- These trained staff members problem-solve, mitigate issues, and respond to service needs and gaps. They are committed to continuous improvement in service coordination and building trust and confidence between stakeholders through ongoing dialogue and collaboration. They are dedicated to community wellness and building strong relationships with businesses, residents, and human service providers.

Durham Region Transitional Support Team (TSP):

- Provide intensive case management to those that are chronically homeless By-Name List individuals to assist with medical, financial, and housing stability support with the goal of facilitating meaningful community connection for TSP participants.
- Assist individuals not on the By-Name List with homelessness prevention intervention and support.
- Commit to working with all Coordinated Access System community agencies to ensure the system operates efficiently. This team provides intensive, community-based case management, active collaboration with community partners, and continued advocacy for individuals at risk of, or who are experiencing homelessness.

Durham Regional Police Service - Mental Health Support Unit (MHSU):

- Consists of five teams, each comprised of a police constable partnered with a registered nurse from Lakeridge Health. MHSU provides daily coverage between the hours of 7 am and 12 am.
- MHSU is a secondary response unit, providing support to front line officers.

Lakeridge Health:

- Lakeridge Health is one of Ontario's largest hospital systems, and operates the province's second-largest mental health and addictions program.
- Child, Youth and Family Program (CYFP) provides services for children and adolescents, aged 5 to 18, who are struggling with serious mental health issues. Services include crisis intervention, inpatient unit and outpatient services.
- The Adult Mental Health Program at Lakeridge Health provides support for adults 18 and over who are struggling with serious mental health issues. Services include crisis intervention, an inpatient unit and outpatient services at the Lakeridge Health Oshawa site and many community locations.

Lakeridge Health's Pinewood Centre:

- Provides a variety of services to help people with alcohol, drug, concurrent mental health and gambling related concerns. Treatment services include residential withdrawal management services, residential treatment services, structured community-based individual and group services, and walk-in and telephone support.

Lakeridge Health's Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinics:

- Offer fast access to quality care for people living with alcohol and opioid-related addictions. Services include medical treatment and counselling services without a doctor's referral.

Metis Nation of Ontario:

- Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) offers a 24-hour Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line.
- Services include culturally specific Métis health and addiction supports for adults, youth, and families in Ontario.

Mental Health Outreach Program (MHOP):

- Family Services Division provides outreach mental health and addiction counselling, and service navigation and coordination to individuals who are homeless or who are newly housed and at risk of homelessness.
- MHOP consists of two Social Workers who work with community partners to deliver outreach services and support in Durham Region.

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences:

- Ontario Shores is a public teaching hospital providing a range of specialized assessment and treatment services to those living with complex and serious mental illness.

- Ontario Shores offers specialized recovery-focused interprofessional programs and services designed to provide successful treatment as interprofessional teams work with patients and families throughout their journey of recovery. Assessment and crisis services are provided, as well as consultation and education.