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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2024-INFO-40
Date: May 31, 2024

Subject:

Update on Durham Region's Integrated Homelessness System Action Plan

Recommendation:

Receive for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress and achievements of the Homelessness Integrated System Action Plan in Durham Region.
- 1.2 The Action Plan was designed to address the complex challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness and to improve the effectiveness of services and support systems.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Regional Municipality of Durham (Durham Region) is the Service System Manager, legislated by the province, and is the Community Entity, designated by the federal government, and is responsible for the planning and coordination of the homelessness support system across Durham.
 - a. Development, oversight and ongoing improvement of the homelessness support system is included in this role with the goal to reduce and ultimately end chronic homelessness¹ in Durham.

¹ Chronic Homelessness - an individual or family who is currently homeless and has been homeless for a total of six months (180 days) over the past year or recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past three years, with a cumulative duration of 18 months (546 days).

2.2 This report provides an update to the [Durham Integrated Homelessness System Action Plan](#), presented to the Health and Social Services Committee on January 11, 2024. The Plan identifies the following five strategic goals and corresponding strategic priorities:

- a. Implement System Integration, Planning and Management
- b. Improve System Capacity and Service Levels
- c. Expand Social and Community Investment
- d. Achieve System Excellence
- e. Boost System Growth of Housing Supply

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

3.1 Presentation: January 2024 – Integrated Homelessness System Action Plan

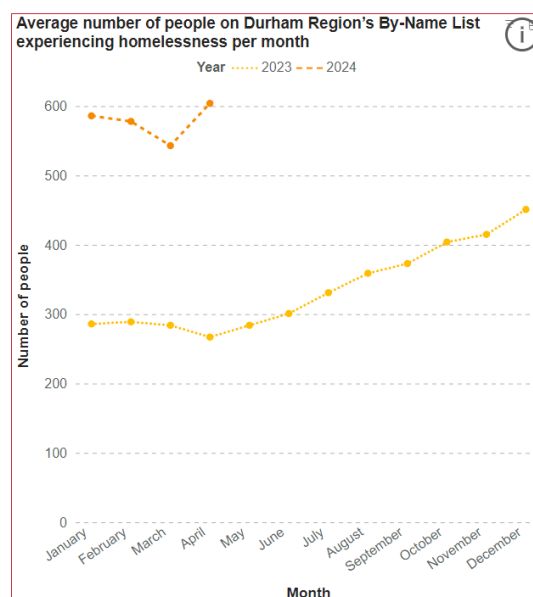
3.2 2023-INFO-11: A Review and Renewed Homelessness Support and Coordinated Access System for Durham Regional Municipality of Durham

3.3 2023-SS-6: Homelessness Support and Coordinated Access System Update

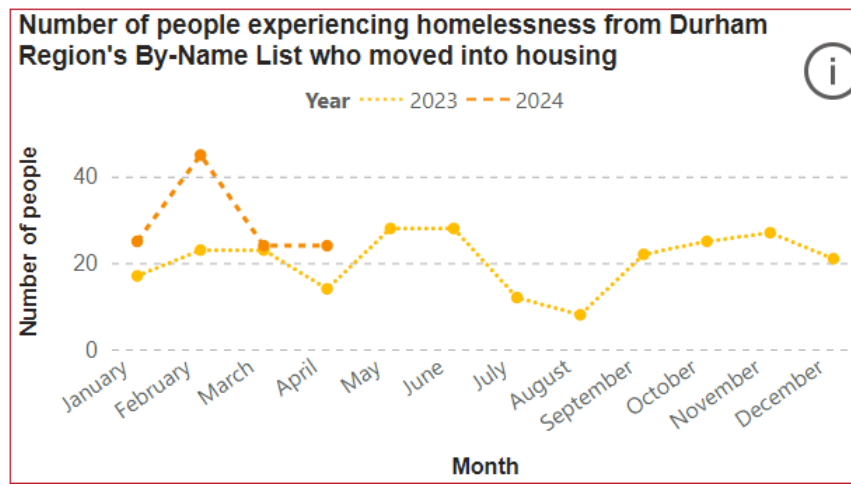
3.4 2023-SS-9: A Second Update on Durham Region’s Homelessness Support and Coordinated Access System

4. System at a Glance 2023

4.1 Homelessness rates continue to rise by an increasing trend. According to the By-Name List (BNL), a total of 1045 individuals were experiencing homelessness in 2023 and approximately 42% (n= 435) of those individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness. In December 2023, at least 451 individuals were experiencing homelessness in Durham.



4.2 According to the BNL, there were a total of 238 individuals moved into housing in 2023. Of the total number of move-ins, 120 of those were chronically homeless.



4.3 Males made up the majority of the BNL at 61% and adults were the highest age demographic at 75%.

- a. The majority of people on the BNL were Canadian Citizens born in Canada at 79% and non-Indigenous people made up 81% of the BNL.

4.4 Most people on the BNL were single households at 87%. 34% of people had a household type of staying in an emergency shelter, followed closely by 29% of people with an unsheltered² status.

4.5 Over half of the people on the BNL had a high to very high acuity score, meaning they require more intensive wrap-around support to obtain and maintain housing.

5. Implement System Integration Planning and Management

5.1 The following outcomes achieved that align with this strategic goal include:

- a. Conducting over 17 information sessions and presentations on the Regional Street Outreach worker role, available tools, and established partnerships. The presentations were delivered to libraries, Durham College, municipal by-law teams, and various other stakeholders.
- b. Establishing monthly coordination meetings with the Primary Care Outreach Program, Mental Health Outreach Program, Transitional Support Program and Human Trafficking.

² Unsheltered includes abandoned building, makeshift/street, transient, encampment/campsite, and vehicle.

- c. The homelessness sector tables convene every six weeks to enhance collaboration and partnership among agencies and other community services, includes the addition of public libraries, that are involved in similar endeavours. Sector tables focus on making continuous improvements to better the work and outcomes in the homelessness system. The Housing Outflow sector table is providing input on data collection and identifying critical information gaps to improve the effectiveness of the BNL and prioritization process.

6. Improve System Capacity and Service Levels

- 6.1 The Region aims to create a more resilient and responsive system that empowers individuals to transition out of homelessness and achieve sustainable housing stability.
- 6.2 The Region has effectively increased system capacity by:
 - a. Expanding the Durham Region's Street Outreach program through a partnership with Durham Region Transit ensures optimal service delivery and addresses identified gaps. From January 7 to March 20, 2024, the Durham Region's Street Outreach teams had 144 proactive interactions at bus stops.
 - b. Durham Region's Street Outreach program continues to collaborate with other service providers in facilitating warm referrals and collaborative service navigation supports for individuals experiencing homelessness. As of May 26, 2024, Durham Region's Street Outreach team facilitated approximately 1,209 warm referrals and collaborative service navigation supports.
 - c. Establishing a Learning Exchange Network that meets monthly with internal and external agencies to address complex cases involving the highly vulnerable population.
 - d. Implementing a coordinated access approach for Winter Warming services in 2023-2024 for the unsheltered population across Durham Region. This includes prioritizing transportation and maintaining constant communication regarding available Winter Warming spaces. 100 additional spaces were made available to support 819 individuals in Durham. The Do Unto Others overnight drop-in remained open in Oshawa and accommodated another 50 spaces each night.
 - e. Lessons learned from this year's winter warming included ensuring accessible space with washrooms and showers within each community, keeping centres open seven days a week regardless of the weather and better transportation options between winter warming centres.
 - f. Launched a central email, Homelesshelp@Durham.ca and phone line 311 ext. 5510 to make seeking help and asking inquiries easier in Durham Region.

- g. Increasing the access points for people in Durham to grant permission to be on the BNL. There are now access points across Durham Region.
- h. Durham Region's shelter system expanded its capacity from 145 beds to 190 as of March 2024.

7. Expand Social and Community Investment

7.1 Expanding social and community investments is vital to ensure a wide range of services and support are available and accessible to those who need them, thus preventing individuals from being left behind.

7.2 This includes initiatives that address mental health and homelessness, providing comprehensive care and resources. Fostering partnerships between government and non-profits can amplify the impact of these investments, leading to stronger, more resilient communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

7.3 Durham Region has demonstrated its commitment to expanding support for homelessness through the following actions:

- a. Facilitating quarterly meetings with local area municipality by-law teams to discuss best practices and improve approaches towards addressing homelessness and encampments in the community.
- b. Continuously enhancing the Homelessness System Continuum of Care by addressing gaps and enhancing services as required through oversight.

8. Achieve System Excellence

8.1 Achieving system excellence requires a collaborative effort involving all levels of government, the community, and the private sector. This entails substantial investment in infrastructure, resources, and expertise.

8.2 Effective system management plays a crucial role in coordinating these efforts, ensuring alignment with strategic goals, and optimizing resource utilization.

8.3 Additionally, strong accountability mechanisms are required to maintain transparency, track progress, and address challenges. By fostering such partnerships, establishing clear goals, and implementing effective management and accountability practices, a strong and resilient service system is built.

8.4 Durham Region continues to achieve excellence through various strategies:

- a. Investing in the GAP committee to ensure regular engagement with individuals who have lived experience, aiming to identify the needs and necessary support for the unsheltered community.

- b. Durham Region continues to advocate at provincial levels for an increase in current social assistance rates. Council has sent a letter to the province asking for an increase in social assistance rates.
- c. Monthly meetings with the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) are held to discuss strengthened partnerships between the community and the new local shelter residences at 1635 Dundas.
- d. The Region has contracted Durham Workforce Authority (DWA) to conduct a comprehensive review of compensation throughout the sector, to understand any gaps related to equity, professional credentials, or fair compensation within the homelessness system.

9. Boosting System Growth of Housing Supply

- 9.1 Durham Region aims to create a more resilient and responsive system that empowers individuals to transition out of homelessness and achieve sustainable housing stability.
- 9.2 According to the April 2024 BNL, a total of at least 604 individuals experiencing homelessness in Durham. Of those, 303 were identified as chronically homeless.
- 9.3 118 individuals have moved into housing between January and April 2024. That is a total of 30 average move-ins monthly.
- 9.4 72% of individuals identified on the BNL with moderate to high acuity needs will benefit from supportive housing.
- 9.5 The engagement process to revise the Durham Region Shelter Standards to support the transition of individuals moving through the continuum of housing from unsheltered, to emergency shelter and into stable forms of housing.
- 9.6 The homelessness system continues developing housing plans for the future state of 1635 Dundas.

10. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 10.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

Goal 2: Community Vitality – To foster an exceptional quality of life with services that contribute to strong neighbourhoods, vibrant and diverse communities, and influence our safety and well-being.

Goal 4: Social Investment – to ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need, so that no individual is left behind.

Goal 5: Service Excellence – To provide exceptional value to Durham taxpayers through responsive, effective, and fiscally sustainable service delivery.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Durham Region aims to create a more resilient and responsive system that empowers individuals to transition out of homelessness and achieve sustainable housing stability.
- 11.2 The homelessness system's commitment to ongoing evaluation and accountability will continue to drive positive outcomes and foster a strong, resilient service system for years to come.
- 11.3 While progress is being made, Durham Region's homelessness system continues to adapt and problem-solve to support people at risk of becoming unsheltered and those who are experiencing homelessness face challenges due to increasing pressures in the rental market, stagnant social assistance rates, persistent mental health and addiction issues, and the rising incidence of homelessness across Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Commissioner of Social Services