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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2024-INFO-59
Date: September 27, 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 from February to August 2024 on the progress and achievements of the Durham Integrated Homelessness System Action Plan.
- 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 (Region) acts as the Service System Manager, legislated by the province, and as 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 homelessness in Durham.
 - b. Despite ongoing efforts to address homelessness in Durham, the number of individuals who are unhoused continues to rise. This increase is attributed to the growing complexities within the population including mental health challenges, and a lack of affordable housing options. The Region's By-Name List has reached 786 individuals based on [August 2024 Built for Zero Report Card](#).

- c. In 2024, a total of 225 individuals were successfully housed from the By-Name List (BNL), while 58 individuals transitioned into public institutions such as jail, hospitals, or treatment facilities, as formally recognized by the governing body.

2.2 The [Durham Integrated Homelessness System Action Plan](#) identifies the following five strategic goals and corresponding strategic priorities:

- a. Implement System Integration, Planning and Management
 - Demonstrate leadership in homelessness prevention and response
 - Collaborate across sectors to ensure value for investments and quality services
 - Engage community members with lived experience to inform system planning
 - Increase data management capacity
- b. Improve System Capacity and Service Levels
 - Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services
 - Collaborate for a seamless service experience
 - Develop service responses to meet needs through collaboration and evidence-informed decision making
 - Enhance service quality and accountability
 - Expand homelessness prevention initiatives
- c. Expand Social and Community Investment
 - Ensure system design and investments provide service access
 - Create strategies to respond to service gaps
 - Invest in housing as a solution to homelessness
- d. Achieve System Excellence
 - Leverage community assets to ensure service delivery and quality
 - Enhance communication to increase public awareness of needs and access to services
 - Demonstrate commitment to continuous quality improvement and accountability
- e. Boost System Growth of Housing Supply
 - Increase number of affordable housing units
 - Increase number of transitional and supportive housing units

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 Region](#)
- 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](#)
- 3.5 [2024-INFO-40: Update on Durham Region's Integrated Homelessness System Action Plan](#)

4. Implement System Integration Planning and Management

- 4.1 The following outcomes have been achieved, aligning with this strategic goal:
 - a. Since May 2024, over 40 information sessions, workshops and presentations were given to libraries, local colleges, local municipal area by-law teams, the Lakeridge Health hospital locations and various other community supports including local businesses.
 - b. The Region partnered with OrgCode Consulting Inc. to review and revise Shelter Standards in collaboration with sector agencies. This effort focused on promoting a more dignified approach and ensuring consistency across the sector.
 - c. The Region's Transitional Support Program and the Christian Faith Outreach Centre Patron Relations Advocate team have collaborated to provide wraparound housing readiness supports to patrons at the regional shelter located at 1635 Dundas. This includes assistance with essential life skills, navigating rental processes, securing necessary documentation, and offering guidance on maintaining long-term housing stability.
 - d. The Region collaborated with Tim Welch Consulting Inc. to develop an encampment strategy that clarifies and respects the approaches of local municipalities, addresses the needs of individuals affected by homelessness, and incorporates input from service providers and other relevant community partners. The information gathered at engagement sessions, research and public policy is the foundation of the draft strategy. Relevant community partners will have opportunities to provide input on the draft before it is finalized and presented to Council for endorsement.
 - e. The Region has coordinated the Point-in-Time (PiT) Count for Durham Region as part of a national effort to measure homelessness across Canada. This count includes both sheltered and unsheltered individuals and helps provide a snapshot of homelessness in Durham. The data collected from this count is crucial for understanding the scope of homelessness and for planning and allocating resources to address it effectively. This effort is done in partnership with the Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness and

other agencies supporting homelessness in the community, including Indigenous partners in Durham Region.

- The PiT count is scheduled to be completed in November 2024 with a final report due back to the Federal Government in January 2025.

5. Improve System Capacity and Service Levels

5.1 The Region aims to create a more resilient and responsive system that empowers individuals to transition out of homelessness and achieve sustainable housing stability.

5.2 The Region has effectively increased system capacity by:

- a. Expanding the Region's Street Outreach program to enhance support for the unsheltered population involves increasing the number of trained outreach workers, improving access to essential resources, and strengthening community partnerships.
 - The Street Outreach program has helped to facilitate over 6,808 interactions in the community.
- b. Coordinating Winter Warming Centres for the unsheltered population across Durham Region for Winter 2024/2025, with a focus on available space around the Region.

Service Provider				
Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS)	-18 years + -All genders -Pets welcome	Pickering	Peace Lutheran Church 928 Liverpool Rd, Pickering	25 Cots
Christian Faith Outreach Centre (CFOC)	-18 years + -All gender	Whitby	Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church 928 Liverpool Rd, Pickering	25 Cots
Do Unto Other (DUO)	-18 years + -All genders -Pets welcome	Oshawa	Cornerstone Gym 133 Simcoe St S Oshawa	20/30 Cots

Back Door Misson (BDM)	-18 years + -All genders -Medically vulnerable	Oshawa	Back Door Misson 66, Simcoe St S, Oshawa	15 Cots
Continuous planning with Clarington				
Continuous planning with North Durham				

- c. The Learning Exchange Network continues to meet monthly with internal and external agencies to address complex cases involving the highly vulnerable population.
- The Learning Exchange Network supports all aspects of the outreach continuum, the attendees consist of outreach staff who engage with unsheltered individuals to connect them with service providers and housing first workers who provide intensive case management to secure and maintain permanent housing. Participants provide agency updates regarding program developments to ensure the system has the most up-to-date information which supports successful system navigation. This space is used to present and discuss theories on best practices to support vulnerable populations. To highlight our position as being a housing-first community, the group examines one of five housing-first principles each month and discuss ways partnering agencies can incorporate these into their service delivery. The Region collaborates, brainstorm, and shares resources to assist each other in removing barriers to support individuals with complex needs. Organically, referrals across the outreach continuum materialize and service providers can tap into others' networks and resources.
- d. Continue to increase access points for the unsheltered population access the By-name list as the systems continues to address gaps.
- John Howard Society in Bowmanville was recently added to support the Clarington unsheltered population as a [community access point](#) for the By Name List.

6. Expand Social and Community Investment

- 6.1 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.

6.2 The Region has demonstrated its commitment to expanding support for homelessness through the following actions:

- a. Facilitating monthly meetings with local area municipality staff and the Homelessness team to discuss best practices and enhance strategies for addressing homelessness within each community.
- b. Developed a partnership between local healthcare providers and the Street Outreach Team to enhance support for the unsheltered population, facilitating improved navigation and access to the health system. This collaboration aims to provide assistance and ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness receive timely and effective healthcare services.
- c. The Regional Street Outreach and Homelessness System teams, Durham Regional Police Service, and Victim Services of Durham Region, collaborated to host a drop-in program for women experiencing homelessness and who are also victims of human trafficking or participate in survival sex work.
- d. The Community Resource Centre located on the upper level of 200 John Street West in the City of Oshawa offers a drop-in space for individuals seeking support with system navigation, workshops (i.e., Life skills) and computer access. It also provides a safe daytime space for those experiencing homelessness, with access to seating and washroom facilities.

7. Achieve System Excellence

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

7.2 The Region continues to achieve excellence through various strategies:

- a. Partnering with the GAP committee to support 5 community events, ensuring that the voices of the unsheltered remain central to decision-making.
- b. The Region continues to advocate at the federal and provincial levels for increased funding to support the services required to support and house the unsheltered population in Durham.
- c. Monthly meetings continue with the Community Liaison Committee to discuss strengthened partnerships between the community and the patrons at who reside at 1635 Dundas.
- d. The Region collaborated with the Durham Workforce Authority to generate a comprehensive report on compensation in the sector, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of disparities in terms of professional credentials, equitable compensation, and fairness within the Homelessness System. The report will be available to be shared by the end of October 2024.
- e. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is responsible for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings across Europe. In partnership with Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU), they are hosting a simulation exercise in Vicenza, Italy in October 2024. This Mediterranean Regional Simulation will take place on the premises of the CoESPU in

Vicenza. It will involve trainees from Italy, Malta, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt. Canada has been invited to participate and will be sending two representatives from Durham Region to assist with the simulation, participate as members of the Team and share best practices and knowledge on Durham's local response to human trafficking. Karly Church, Human Trafficking team lead from Victim Services of Durham Region, and Jocelyn Siciliano, Area Manager in the Income, Employment and Homelessness Supports Division from Durham Region Social Services will be attending.

8. Boosting System Growth of Housing Supply

8.1 Implementing a sustained increase in the supply of housing units across the Region is crucial for boosting system growth and addressing housing needs.

8.2 The Homelessness System has demonstrated this through:

- a. Regional staff are actively working on the second phase of the engagement plan for the development of housing options at 1635 Dundas, which was presented to the [Regional Council](#) on June 26, 2024.
- b. The Community Development of Council Durham (CDCD), Opening Doors Program has expanded its initiatives to foster better landlord engagement. To date, CDCD has onboarded 35 new landlords, secured 47 units and housed 113 individuals. This program will continue to increase the availability of housing options in the Homelessness System.

9. Relationship to Strategic Plan

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

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

10. Conclusion

10.1 The Region's homelessness system remains dedicated to addressing and bridging the existing gaps in the system while striving to meet the objectives outlined in the Homelessness System Action Plan.

- 10.2 Despite the continuous progress made, the numbers of people experiencing chronic homelessness continues to rise it is evident that sustained and meaningful impact can only be achieved through robust partnerships and increased funding.
- 10.3 By working collaboratively and securing the necessary resources, Durham can ensure that the efforts translate into tangible improvements in the lives of those experiencing homelessness. Together, we can build a more inclusive and supportive community for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Commissioner of Social Services