



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	May 25, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Pressure at Emergency Shelters Serving Single Homeless Women (CS13051(b)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Brian Kreps (905) 546-2424 ext. 4329 Gillian Hendry (905) 546-2424 ext. 4818
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the General Manager of Community and Emergency Services be authorized and directed to extend the service agreement with Good Shepherd Mary's Place for 10 temporary emergency shelter beds for single women experiencing homelessness from June 1, 2015 to November 28, 2015 at a cost of \$76,075 to be funded from the 100% provincially funded Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative;
- (b) That the General Manager of Community and Emergency Services be authorized and directed to enter into a service agreement with Good Shepherd Mary's Place for five permanent emergency shelter beds at an annualized cost of \$76,075 effective November 29, 2015 to be funded from the 100% provincially funded Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative;
- (c) That staff be directed to conduct a Call for Applications for an agency to provide 15 temporary emergency shelter beds for single women experiencing homelessness from November 29, 2015 to December 31, 2016 to be funded from the 100% Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and the Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters Reserve (Account #112239) ;
- (d) That staff be directed to conduct a Call for Applications for an agency to provide five mobile case managers to assist women who are staying in emergency shelter beds to access and maintain permanent housing from November 30, 2015 to December 31, 2016 to be funded from the Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters Reserve (Account #112239); and,

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- (e) That the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the CEO of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network and the Minister of Health and Long Term Care to request that they fund a Withdrawal Support Program for single women experiencing homelessness.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the November 25, 2013 Emergency and Community Services (E&CS) Committee meeting, Report CS13051 – Pressure at Emergency Shelters Serving Single Homeless Women, described the challenges facing the women’s emergency shelter system due to an inadequate number of shelter beds to serve single homeless women. The report highlighted that over the past three years, shelters serving single homeless women were frequently operating over capacity and turning women away.

In response, Council approved the recommendation to temporarily increase the number of emergency shelter beds from 20 to 30 beds at Mary’s Place from December 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014. Funding was also approved for two additional case managers and a housing worker. The intention of this service was to reduce the need for shelter beds by helping single homeless women more quickly leave the shelter and support them in finding and maintaining permanent housing. In May 2014, Council approved continuation of the 10 temporary beds for 12 months from June 1, 2014 to May 31, 2015 (Report CS13051(a)) and directed staff to develop options for a more permanent solution to the pressure at emergency shelters serving single homeless women.

Even with the 10 temporary emergency shelter beds at Mary’s Place and the additional case management supports, emergency shelters serving single women have continued to operate at full occupancy and have had to turn away high numbers of women. The Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) collected data for the month of December 2014 to illustrate the challenges in the women’s emergency shelter system. Mary’s Place and WomanKind reported turning away women 130 times because they were full. This translates into 46 unique women turned away from Mary’s Place and 29 from WomanKind in a single month. During the same period, Hamilton’s four Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters turned women away 330 times because they were full. This number represents women and children fleeing violence as well as single women experiencing homelessness.

A report was prepared by the SPRC and the Women’s Homelessness Planning Collaborative (WHPC) called “Emergency Planning for Services For Single Women Experiencing Homelessness” and is attached as Appendix A to Report CS13051(b). The report which guided the recommendations in this report states that while additional emergency shelter beds are needed in the short term, a new emergency shelter for women should not be developed and that supports are needed to help women leave the shelter as quickly as possible.

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Given the continued pressure in the women's emergency shelter system, it has been determined that 20 additional beds are required to meet the current demand in the women's emergency shelter system. Good Shepherd Centres has agreed to continue to provide 10 temporary beds at Mary's Place until November 28, 2015. They have also agreed to provide five beds on a permanent basis after that date for an ongoing total of 25 beds. The facility was designed to serve 20 women and it has been challenging for Mary's Place staff to serve so many women in the space. It is therefore recommended that funding for the 10 temporary beds at Mary's Place be extended from June 1 to November 28, 2015 and that five of these bed beds continue to be funded on a permanent basis effective November 29, 2015.

It is recommended that a Call for Applications be conducted to select an agency to provide 15 temporary shelter beds effective November 30, 2015. The Call for Applications will specify that funding will be limited to operating costs and will not include capital funding for the construction of a new building or renovation of an existing building. This approach is intended to utilize existing facilities in the community. The Call for Applications will also seek an agency to provide mobile case management with a team of five case managers to support the 20 additional women that will be served through the emergency shelter system as well as the women in overflow and transitional beds that are currently receiving no case management support. Without this service, women with higher needs will only continue to experience long stays.

It is also recommended that the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, write to the CEO of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand and Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN) and the Minister of Health and Long Term Care requesting that they fund a Withdrawal Support Program in collaboration with WomanKind and the emergency shelters serving single women experiencing homelessness. This program would provide support to shelter staff to better serve women with significant addiction issues. Currently, women who arrive at a shelter and display high levels of intoxication are sent to the Emergency Department for medical clearance. This program would prevent a significant number of these visits. A similar program is already funded by the HNHB LHIN focused on youth at Notre Dame House. This program has seen a 99% decrease in referrals to emergency department for medical clearance due to intoxication.

Housing Services Division staff will work with WHPC to assess the impact of the 15 additional temporary emergency shelter beds and the additional supports provided through mobile case management. Staff will also work with WHPC to assess and develop an implementation plan for the remaining five recommendations in the Emergency Planning for Services for Single Women Experiencing Homelessness Report and will report back to E&CS Committee in September 2016.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

The cost of extending the 10 beds at the Good Shepherd's Mary's Place by six months from June 1, 2015 to November 28, 2015 is \$76,075. The annualized cost of the additional five beds on a permanent basis effective November 29, 2015 is \$76,075. The costs will be covered from unallocated 100% Provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding which was set aside to address the pressures within the women's shelter system. There will be no impact on the net levy.

The cost of the 15 additional temporary beds and the mobile case management service will be determined through a Call for Applications. Unallocated CHPI funding is available to support these costs as well as funding in the Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) Reserve (Account #112239). It is anticipated that these funds are sufficient to cover the cost of the 15 additional temporary beds and the case management supports up until December 31, 2016.

This funding solution is not sustainable beyond December 31, 2016. Housing Services Division staff will return to E&CS Committee in September 2016 with a report to outline the impact of the additional 20 beds and mobile case management services on the women's shelter system and with a plan for future service needs and funding options for 2017.

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications associated with Report CS13051(b).

Legal:

The additional funding for the beds at Mary's Place will be provided to Good Shepherd Centres through a Service Agreement. Legal Services will review and draft any ancillary agreements, as may be required. Legal Services staff will also ensure that the security requirements, as required from the project proponents are fulfilled to protect the interests of the City in accordance with the Service Agreement.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the November 25, 2013 E&CS Committee meeting, Report CS13051 – Pressure at Emergency Shelters Serving Single Homeless Women described the challenges facing the women's emergency shelter system due to an inadequate number of shelter beds to serve single homeless women. The report highlighted that over the past three years, shelters serving single homeless women were frequently operating over capacity and turning women away.

The first recommendation was that 10 additional emergency shelter beds be funded temporarily at Mary's Place for the period of December 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014 at a cost of \$99,075 to be funded through the Social Services Initiative Reserve fund. This was an immediate response to high shelter utilization at all the emergency shelters

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serving single homeless women including Mary's Place, the overflow beds at the Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters and WomanKind. The second recommendation was that funding be provided to Good Shepherd Centres to increase the level of case management and housing supports provided to single homeless women through the Supporting Our Sisters (SOS) program for 2014.

By December 4, 2013, the 10 additional beds were in place and Mary's Place was operating with 30 beds plus an additional 5 beds for overflow stays. In January 2014, Good Shepherd Centres hired two additional Case Workers and the additional Housing Support Worker for the SOS program. Between December 2013 and March 2014 there were 3,700 nightly stays at Mary's Place, an increase of 44% over December 2012 to March 2014. Nightly stays refers to the number of nights in which people stay in an emergency shelter, not the number of people. Even with the additional 10 beds, the overflow beds were full at Mary's Place on most nights resulting in 216 nightly stays over capacity.

Emergency & Community Services (E&CS) Committee approved the recommendation in Report CS13051(a) to continue the 10 temporary beds for 12 months from June 1, 2014 to May 31, 2015 at a cost of \$152,150. The report also stated that staff would work with the Women's Housing Planning Collaborative (WHPC) to explore ways that existing resources can be used effectively and more efficiently and to develop options for a more permanent solution to the pressure at emergency shelters serving single homeless women. WHPC is a planning table consisting of Good Shepherd Women's Services, YWCA, Native Women's Centre, Phoenix Place, Mission Services, Inasmuch House and WomanKind. Housing Services Division staff and Ministry of Community and Social Services staff participate in an ex-officio capacity

Housing Services Division staff and WHPC members met from September to December 2014 to develop the report that is attached as Appendix A to Report CS13051(b). With support of the SPRC they established a long term vision for how best to serve single women experiencing homelessness. They also collected quantitative and qualitative data regarding the extent of the shortage of shelter beds.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

There are no policy implications associated with Report CS13051(b).

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

The recommendations contained in this report are based on the Emergency Planning for Services for Single Women Experiencing Homelessness report prepared by the SPRC and WHPC. In developing the report, WHPC consulted with women who have used emergency services. Three focus groups were held with the Supporting Our Sisters (SOS) Advisory Committee, the Woman Abuse Working Group (WAWG) Survivors, and a group of women in the Transitional Living Program at the YWCA.

Many ideas on how to best assist women experiencing housing and homelessness issues came up during the focus groups.

The recommendation to increase the number of shelter beds for single women and provide additional transitional supports aligns with the idea of making information more widely available to help women navigate services and providing more options for women experiencing homelessness.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONAL FOR RECOMMENDATION

The need for additional shelter beds for single women experiencing homelessness is based on the occupancy and turn away data from the shelters serving single women experiencing homelessness in 2014. The occupancy rate for the 30 beds at Mary's Place was 101% for 2014. The monthly occupancy rate ranged from a high of 108% to a low of 96% percent. WomanKind is the only other shelter that had dedicated overflow beds for single women experiencing homelessness. The monthly occupancy rate for its six beds was 99%.

Mary's Place is the only shelter from which turn away data is reported on a monthly basis. Women were turned away from Mary's Place an average of 205 times a month in 2014 because the shelter was full. In December 2014, Mary's Place and WomanKind collectively turned away women 132 times because they were full.

The recommendation to fund a mobile team consisting of five Housing Workers would provide support to women to stabilize their current situation and to begin to look for longer term housing. Without case management services, women will experience longer stays in shelter beds. The mobile team was recommended as a cost-effective and efficient way to provide reliable service to several sites. Funding individual staff at each shelter would be more expensive and would not be as responsive. This way, mobile case managers will only go where women are currently staying.

The Emergency Planning for Services for Single Women Experiencing Homelessness report contains 9 short, medium and long term recommendations to address the needs of single women experiencing homelessness. The recommendations in this report address the following four recommendations:

1. *Addition of Emergency Shelter Beds with Supports* - The existing ten temporary emergency shelter beds should be continued with an additional 10 beds added across the system (for a total of 20 beds) to better meet the growing need for emergency shelter for single homeless women in Hamilton.
2. *Maintain Funding for Existing Resources* - Ensure the financial stability of existing resources in the women's housing system, particularly the transitional housing pieces which are a crucial element to many women seeking permanent housing.

3. *Ensure Adequate Staff Supports for Women in Emergency Shelter/Transitional Housing* - Along with adequate staffing for basic emergency shelter beds at each location, a mobile team of housing workers is needed to help women in all shelters access housing more quickly. A minimum of five mobile housing workers would provide dedicated service to single homeless women at Mary's Place, Womankind, Honouring the Circle, YWCA, and Inasmuch House.
4. *Expansion of Withdrawal Support Services Team (Womankind) & Designated Beds for Addiction* - That the City of Hamilton ask the LHIN to fund the expansion of WomanKind's withdrawal management team to assist homeless women, along with the designation of bed(s) for withdrawal management at one other shelter. This specialized withdrawal management staff would be able to triage women onsite to determine if a woman needs immediate specialized care at a hospital emergency room or Womankind, or if she can be supported through withdrawal within the shelter at a designated bed.

The remaining five recommendations in the report speak to the development of a centralized intake system, development of interim housing with supports, development of affordable housing to meet the unique needs of women, and exploring how the Residential Care Facility/Domiciliary Hostel Subsidy Program could better meet the needs of women and developing peer to peer supports in the community. The recommendations contained in report CS13051(b) address the most urgent recommendations in the report. Staff will work with the WHPC to explore the other recommendations and opportunities to implement them and will report back to E&CS Committee in September 2016.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #2

Valued & Sustainable Services

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

Strategic Objective

2.3 Enhance customer service satisfaction.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CS13051(b): Women's Housing Planning Collaborative (WHPC)
– Emergency Planning for Services for Single
Women Experiencing Homelessness