



INFORMATION REPORT

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| TO: | Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee |
| COMMITTEE DATE: | June 22, 2015 |
| SUBJECT/REPORT NO: | 20,000 Homes Campaign (CES15012(a)) (City Wide) |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | City Wide |
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| SIGNATURE: | |

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

This report provides Council with an update on Hamilton's participation in the 20,000 Homes Campaign (Report CES15012). The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a national campaign led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) that will be officially launched on June 16, 2015. The campaign's objective is to bring communities together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2018.

The campaign supports grassroots non-partisan advocacy efforts to build public support for ending homelessness and political support for renewed federal and provincial investment in housing and support services. The 20,000 Homes Campaign is Canadian-based but was inspired by the successful 100,000 Homes Campaign in the United States which housed over 105,000 homeless individuals across 186 communities over 4 years.

Hamilton was selected to pilot the first step of the campaign, known as a registry week, in advance of the official launch, along with Ottawa and Waterloo, in recognition of Hamilton's long standing history of community collaboration and delivery of Housing First programs. City staff led a local registry week during April 26-30th, 2015.

Overview of Registry Week Process

Planning

The planning and implementation of the registry week was informed by thorough input from community agencies and planning collaboratives including the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group, the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Integration and Coordination Committee, the Street Youth Planning Collaborative, the Tenants Advisory Committee, the Food & Shelter Advisory Committee and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. Feedback from partners and community members during and after the registry week pilot highlight the merit in undertaking the initiative and provided valuable information for future consideration.

The cost for Hamilton to conduct the registry week was covered by \$15,000 through the current Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) administrative budget.

The implementation of Hamilton's registry week received widespread support. A total of 15 community partners provided space and staff expertise to support survey teams and respondents. A list of participating community partners can be found in Appendix A of Report CES15012(a). Other City of Hamilton Divisions and Departments including communications support from the City Manager's office, Public Health and Recreation provided support during the process. Representatives of other municipalities, including Halton, Peel and the Region of Niagara volunteered their time to support and learn from Hamilton's effort.

During Hamilton's registry week, The Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, attended the volunteer training to commend and encourage the volunteers' and the City of Hamilton's efforts toward ending homelessness. During the training event the Minister announced support for the National 20,000 Homes Campaign to be launched across Canada in June 2015, with a funding contribution from the Province of Ontario of \$50,000.

Surveying

Over 150 volunteers, on teams led by professional social service staff, surveyed over 454 individuals and 15 families experiencing homelessness on April 26 and April 27, 2015. Participation was voluntary and participants received a \$10 Tim Horton's gift card to thank them for their time.

Team leaders were provided with training and orientation to the registry week process, the survey tool, and their responsibility to support volunteers to ensure best practices in engagement. All volunteers were required to sign confidentiality agreements and received training prior to participating in the surveying.

Survey sites included; emergency shelters, transitional housing, drop-in programs, day programs, a community health centre; a recreation centre; and, on the streets in the downtown core.

City staff inputted the survey data into a secure database. Additional supports for data entry and analysis were provided by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.

Registry Week Results

Survey results provided information on individuals' history of housing and homelessness as well as their health and social needs. The results presented below are for the individuals surveyed and do not include families. Given the relatively small number of families surveyed, a breakdown of their results will not be shared to protect the anonymity of each family and individual members. An overview of the results can be found in Appendix B of Report CES15012(a).

- The majority of individuals surveyed identified as male (68%). Female identified individuals experiencing homelessness may be underrepresented among survey respondents as there are fewer emergency shelter beds for women in the system. Women experiencing homelessness may also be more likely to stay with family and friends rather than accessing formal supports.
- The majority of respondents (75%) were between the ages of (26-64).
- Over one quarter of the individuals surveyed (26%) identified as Aboriginal or as having Aboriginal Ancestry (including Métis, Inuit, Indian, and Native with or without status). People who identify as Aboriginal represent 1.5% of Hamilton's total population. These findings demonstrate that Hamilton's Aboriginal population is over-represented amongst those experiencing homelessness in our community.
- The individuals surveyed reported having experienced homelessness for an average of 3 years (in an emergency shelter or on the street). People who experience homelessness for 6 months or longer are considered "chronically homeless".
- People surveyed reported having significant physical and mental health conditions. For example, 82% of people surveyed reported having a mental health condition, 69% reported having a serious medical condition and 73% reported having a substance use condition. Almost half (47%) reported having a mental health, medical and substance use condition, commonly known as tri-morbidity. Tri-morbidity is an indicator of mortality. Survey results demonstrate the need for better health, learning and economic supports in order for people to stabilize their housing.
- The use of health services is extremely high among individuals surveyed. In the last 6 months, 266 people visited the Hospital Emergency Room 994 times. The estimated cost for emergency room visits over the 6 month period range between \$185,878 and \$417,480. In the same 6 month period, 144 people required an ambulance trip 328 times. The total cost of ambulance trips over the last 6 months for survey respondents ranges from \$67,896 to \$114,144. It costs

considerably less to house someone and provide the supports they need to keep them housed than it does to offer supports while they remain homeless. Research has shown that every \$10 spent on housing and supports for chronically homeless individuals results in \$21.72 in savings related to health care, social supports, housing and involvement in the justice system.¹

- In addition to significant health needs, survey respondents also reported important safety concerns. For example, 40% of people surveyed reported being attacked or beaten up since becoming homeless.
- People surveyed also reported having involvement with the legal and child welfare systems. For example, 20% of respondents reported having to deal with legal issues and 39% of youth surveyed reported having been in foster care.
- The majority of respondents (62%) reported not having enough money to meet their expenses on a monthly basis. While a number of risk factors contribute to homelessness, the most predictable risk factor is a lack of income. If people do not have enough money while they are experiencing homelessness they cannot afford to move out of homelessness and into stable housing situations.

The registry week data confirms what is evidenced through research, the lived experience of our community members and the expertise of service providers: good, safe, affordable housing is the foundation for a healthy quality of life. Research clearly shows better health, learning and economic outcomes for people who are appropriately housed. It is hard to hold down a job, go to school or raise a family if you don't have a place to call home.

The data will be used to inform provincial and federal partners of Hamilton's homelessness and housing needs. The data will ensure that people experiencing homelessness are receiving the appropriate types and levels of supports. It will also help determine a baseline against which future trends, such as a reduction in people experiencing chronic/episodic homelessness, will be documented.

Communications

A summary of registry week results was shared publicly at a Community Debrief Event in Council Chambers on April 30, 2015.

The initiative was covered by local media through newspaper articles, radio and television interviews.

Over 560,000 individuals were reached via Twitter with tweets using the hashtag #hamont and #20khomes. On April 26, 2015 and April 30, 2015, #20kHomes was the top item trending in social media in Hamilton.

Current Status and Next Steps

Call to Action

The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a call to action, underscoring that homelessness is a national emergency requiring urgent and immediate action. Housing First - permanent, safe, appropriate and affordable housing with supports without readiness requirements – is a key principle of the campaign.

Through the data analysis, 109 individuals were identified as having severe issues and conditions that impact housing stability. The City of Hamilton will work with Housing First providers to reconnect with these 109 individuals to offer housing services and supports.

The City's 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and the 20,000 Homes Campaign both call for a coordinated system for ending homelessness. This includes better discharge planning from institutions such as hospitals, corrections and mental health services so that everyone is discharged with a clear path to housing. Leveraging the information and momentum of the campaign, city staff will work with partners to support system integration and the development of a coordinated homelessness system of care in Hamilton.

The 20,000 Homes Campaign's call to action to build political support for renewed and adequate federal and provincial investment in affordable housing is a critical investment strategy mirrored in the City of Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

In coordination with community partners, the City of Hamilton is also committed to creating safe and affordable rental housing options in Hamilton by developing supportive and engaging relationships with landlords. A landlord engagement strategy, through the Housing Help Centre, City of Hamilton staff and Housing First providers is underway.

Campaign Process

Under the coordination of the CAEH, the lessons learned through Hamilton's participation in the registry week pilot will be shared with dozens of cities across Canada preparing to join the 20,000 Homes Campaign. Hamilton will continue to receive the support of the CAEH and participate in coaching opportunities as the campaign unfolds.

Participating in the campaign will provide City Staff with a more comprehensive understanding of our community's unique set of strengths and challenges relating to homelessness. This information will help inform local policy and service delivery improvements and support the monitoring and tracking of progress, such as reductions in local homelessness. Registry week was the first step of the 20,000 Homes Campaign. Continued coaching opportunities and knowledge exchange with other communities will support the City's efforts to address homelessness. As a national initiative, the campaign will provide the City of Hamilton the opportunity to draw on

resources, best practices and lessons learned in addressing homelessness in other communities across Canada to support our community as we come together to find solutions to homelessness in Hamilton and across the nation.

Council will be provided with progress reports regarding the City's participation in the National 20,000 Homes Campaign and the community's movement toward a more effective and coordinated homelessness system of care in Hamilton.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES15012(a): 20,000 Homes Registry Week Community Partners

Appendix B to Report CES15012(b): Hamilton 20,000 Homes Registry Week Infographic