



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services
COMMITTEE DATE:	November 9, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	2016 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count (CES15055) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

The City of Hamilton as the Community Entity for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) will be participating in a national Point in Time Count in February 2016. A Point in Time Count is an enumeration of people experiencing homelessness who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing or sleeping rough.

All communities receiving HPS funding are encouraged by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to participate in the National Point in Time Count. This will be the first time communities across Canada complete a Point in Time Count at the same time, with the same methodology, to gain an understanding of homelessness across the country. The count will provide vital local information about people experiencing homelessness, while also contributing to the understanding of homelessness nationally.

Objective

The objective of the 2016 Point in Time Count is to provide a snapshot of homelessness across the entire City. The 2016 Point in Time Count will establish a baseline for the number of individuals in the City who are experiencing absolute homelessness, and will provide the opportunity to track local progress related to homelessness reductions over time. It will also provide data that will inform local homelessness policy and practices.

A standardized survey will be administered to determine the characteristics of individuals experiencing homelessness such as age, gender, Aboriginal identity, Veteran status, and health and housing needs. In addition to providing a snapshot of who is experiencing homelessness in Hamilton, this information will be used to match individuals with the appropriate level and type of supports.

Surveys will be administered by teams of volunteers and social service professionals at numerous locations across the city including day programs, drop-in programs, emergency shelters and street surveys.

While it will not be possible to count every single person who is experiencing homelessness in Hamilton, it will provide a better understanding of homelessness from those who do participate. Because the count will not capture everyone – there will be some populations that may be underrepresented. For example, women who identify as experiencing homelessness may be underrepresented as there are fewer emergency shelter beds for women in Hamilton. Women may also be more likely to stay with family and friends rather than access formal supports.

Two efforts to identify the number of people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton were conducted in 2015. The first, *All We Need is Community: Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Survey* was conducted in February, with a focus on counting the number of individuals with Aboriginal Ancestry experiencing homelessness. The count was coordinated by Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council in consultation with the Aboriginal Community. Preliminary results indicate that 353 surveys were completed and that 69 Aboriginal and 60 non-Aboriginal individuals self-reported as experiencing homelessness. The second initiative, completed in April, was the *20,000 Homes Campaign Registry Week*. The 20,000 Homes Registry Week focused on the downtown core and yielded 454 individual survey respondents. Over 100 respondents were found to be eligible for, and have subsequently been referred to, Housing First programs.

The 2016 Point in Time Count will build on this work by expanding the geographic scope to the entire city (including urban, suburban, rural metro-adjacent and rural landscapes) and include considerations to support the participation of the Aboriginal community. The timing of the count will be coordinated with other communities across Canada.

Funding

The cost for Hamilton to participate in the Point in Time Count will be covered by federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funds. Through the original HPS allocation, \$100,000 was designated for the Point in Time Count. HPS communities are eligible to receive additional funding to support participation in the Point in Time Count if they conduct the count in the first 60 days of 2016. ESDC recognizes that when

communities conduct counts in the same time of year using a common approach, the results can be used to build a better understanding of homelessness across Canada.

ESDC has approved an additional \$77,000 for Hamilton to complete the Point-in-Time Count. The additional resources will add to the existing \$100,000 HPS funding allocation, allowing the City to fulfil the prescribed Point in Time Count methodology and expectations set forth by ESDC.

The funding will cover a 1-2 day count across the entire city; comprehensive volunteer recruitment and training; data collection and data management support; robust data analysis; and survey materials.

Process

Housing Services Division has contracted the services of an external consultant to support the 2016 Point in Time Count. It will be a comprehensive count that includes the Aboriginal community. The consultancy team will include a Project Coordinator to be supported by an Aboriginal Coordinator.

Under the leadership of Housing Services Division staff, and with the support of the consultant, a Point in Time Count Committee will develop an implementation plan that involves extensive consultation with all major stakeholders and will include people with lived experience, representatives from rural communities and local poverty groups. Volunteers will be recruited to assist in completing surveys with people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers will be required to attend training on how to conduct the surveys and how to engage with vulnerable populations.

Current Status and Next Steps

Housing Services Division staff will begin to engage stakeholders in the planning of the Point in Time Count in November 2015.

Housing Services Division Staff will participate in the training hosted by ESDC for local Point in Time Count Coordinators in the November 2015.

The objective is to complete the Point in Time Count by February 29, 2016. Results of the survey will be shared publicly in a community debrief event.