



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 19, 2020
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness (HSC20020) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Brian Kreps (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1782
SUBMITTED BY:	Edward John Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (a) That the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities, or his designate, be authorized to enter into agreements, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with Living Rock Ministries, Mission Services, Wesley Urban Ministries and the YWCA Hamilton to continue enhanced drop-in services at Living Rock, Willow's Place, Wesley Day Centre and Carole Ann's Place respectively to June 30, 2021 to a maximum of \$3.2 M;
- (b) That the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities, or his designate, be authorized to enter into an agreement, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with the Salvation Army Booth Centre in the amount of approximately \$400 K to fund capital costs to renovate the facility to allow for appropriate physical distancing and create 30 additional single rooms for a total occupancy of 80 single men; and,
- (c) That the Mayor formally request additional provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and federal Reaching Home funding in order to address the shortfall related to COVID-19 spending within Hamilton's homelessness serving population.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Hamilton, in conjunction with its community partners, has provided a comprehensive response to the needs of people experiencing homelessness since its Emergency Operations Centre was activated on March 12, 2020 in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. The priorities have been to provide emergency shelter in a

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manner that allows for appropriate physical distancing, provide isolation spaces for people experiencing homelessness who test positive for COVID-19 and support community agencies to maintain critical services to the homeless population.

Only three individuals experiencing homelessness have tested positive for COVID-19 in Hamilton's shelter system. This is a testament to the variety of initiatives put in place and the hard work done by community agencies to screen their employees and clients regularly and change their cleaning and business practices. This effort has been further supported by the Shelter Health Network's coordination of testing for people experiencing homelessness in a wide variety of settings.

Efforts to prevent transmission of COVID-19 may be required for the next 12 to 24 months. As Hamilton reopens, Bennetto Recreation Centre and First Ontario Centre will eventually return to their intended uses and will no longer be available to provide isolation space and emergency shelter. Additionally, hotel rooms that have expanded emergency shelter capacity will eventually be required as travel resumes.

Housing Services has developed a framework outlining immediate, mid-term and long term actions. The framework will guide the transition from emergency response to a focus on adaption and transformation of the services it funds acknowledging that preventing transmission of the COVID-19 virus requires rethinking much of how services have been traditionally delivered.

Immediate first steps outlined in this report include extending drop-in services for men, women and youth in order to provide consistent access to hygiene services. In addition, capital resources are requested to begin the necessary renovations to emergency shelters to support infection prevention and control measures and increase capacity.

Making these changes will require funding beyond the current expenditures for homelessness services. Staff are making every effort to work within funding provided by senior levels of government.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

The recommendations in Report HSC20020 represent new investments in operating and capital expenditures in the shelter system. To date the City has received \$6,880,800 in provincial and \$ 2,274,966 in federal funding to assist with costs related to serving the homeless population during the pandemic. An additional \$345,000 was recently announced by the Canadian Medical Association Foundation.

As of May 31, \$4.7 M of pandemic related spending had been committed. Monthly costs for all pandemic-related spending for the homeless population are currently forecast at \$2.6 M. By August 31, \$9.2 M of the \$9.5 M funding received to date will be spent. This is prior to any recovery forecast assumptions. The full year expected COVID-19 related costs are \$19.8 M which exceeds current approved funding by \$6.4 M. The province has indicated additional funding is pending from the Social Services Relief Fund. No specific commitment for Hamilton has been received.

Should no new resources be received from the provincial or federal government, the City of Hamilton would need to explore other financial options to support the on-going homelessness needs for the recommendations above and future funding required to support the delivery of homeless services in a COVID-19 environment.

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The City of Hamilton's Emergency Operations Centre was activated on March 12, 2020 in response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 30, 2020, the federal government notified the City of Hamilton it would receive \$2,274,966 in funding through the Reaching Home program for additional services for people experiencing homelessness.

On April 1, 2020, the provincial government notified the City of Hamilton it would receive \$6,880,800 in funding through the Social Services Relief Fund.

On May 29, 2020, the federal government informed the City it would receive funding of \$345,500 from the Community Relief Fund administered by the Canadian Medical Association Foundation.

The City of Hamilton's response to the needs of people experiencing homelessness has included:

- Creation of an Isolation Centre at Bennetto Recreation Centre for COVID-19 positive individuals to isolate themselves until they are cleared;
- Expansion of shelter operations into three hotels with up to 48 rooms for families, 35 rooms for single men & couples run by Mission Services and 28 rooms for women run by Good Shepherd;
- Established a temporary shelter for men with capacity for up to 75 at First Ontario Centre which is operated by Good Shepherd Centres to allow the men's shelters to reduce capacity to allow for physical distancing;

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- Enhanced and extended drop-in services for women at Carol Anne's Place (YMCA) and Willow's Place (Mission Services);
- Coordinated delivery of more than \$550 K from the provincial and federal government to 27 local agencies for expenses such as food, enhanced cleaning, Personal Protective Equipment.
- Led weekly calls with partner agencies to identify emerging issues and coordinate responses.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Housing Services consulted with the sector planning tables including the Women's Housing Planning Collaborative, the Men's Emergency Services Coordination Committee, as well as an ad hoc sector group representing community partners in the health and housing sector. Advice from these groups has been that shelter capacity must be maintained to address current needs and in anticipation of a potential rise in demand when evictions resume. There was also support for continuing and expanding responses that allow for maximizing physical distancing including the adaptation of existing congregate space to single rooms. There was also consistent support for the continuation and expansion of drop-in services out of concern for the needs of people who are not able to access shelter spaces and required access for washrooms, support services and, in the case of women, a place to sleep.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Housing Services has developed a framework to guide its transition from emergency response to a focus on adaptation and transformation of its services. Integral to the framework is maintaining and improving screening, testing and infection control measures in all programs and facilities. Some of the key elements of the framework include:

- The current number of shelter beds must be maintained. The number of beds available now for families, men and women is higher than it was before the pandemic. It is anticipated that demand will continue to be high and may rise when evictions eventually resume.
- Men's shelters, which are largely congregate settings where guests do not have their own room, cannot return to their original capacity until they are able to adapt their infrastructure. Returning to full capacity would severely limit the ability for staff and guests to practice physical distancing.
- Enhanced day program/drop-in capacity must continue. This includes maintaining additional hours at Living Rock and Wesley Centre and extending service at Carole Ann's Place and Willow's Place. These services are vital to

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men and women who are unwilling or unable to access shelter beds. Continued restrictions on public facilities will mean these programs will continue to be important sources of washrooms.

- Space for people experiencing homelessness to isolate if they test positive must be maintained.

Framework for Adapting and Transforming Services

Immediate Actions	Mid-Term Actions	Long Term Actions
<p>Unsheltered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate extensions to emergency funding to drop-ins and day centres to ensure continued access to hygiene and support opportunities. <p>Shelters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen shelter diversion and rapid rehousing initiatives • Plan for decommissioning of First Ontario Centre as temporary shelter. • Reconfigure space within existing shelters to maximise capacity and promote social distancing. • Secure leases with hotels to ensure existing capacity is maintained. • Determine need for alternative shelter sites. <p>Isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for decommissioning of Bennetto Recreation Centre. • Identify sustainable model for isolation services and appropriate location. <p>Permanent Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise capacity of municipally-funded Intensive Case Management Programs to help house people from streets, shelters and hotels. • Coordinate available housing subsidies to support access to permanent housing. 	<p>Shelters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decommission First Ontario centre. • Implement plans to maintain existing number of shelter beds. <p>Isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decommission Bennetto Recreation Centre. • Implement new isolation service model. <p>Permanent Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to use any affordable housing projects under construction to serve this population. 	<p>Shelters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with the planning and development process for those shelters looking to significantly and permanently establish facilities that are supportive and resilient to both the housing and health needs of the population. <p>Permanent Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the amount and design of permanent low barrier supportive housing to significantly increase the availability and suitability of units. • Ensure the coordination and comprehensive integration of housing and health funding to promote effective, resilient and supportive housing forms.

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Immediately, Housing Services will work with partners to adapt the system through the following:

- Negotiate extensions to emergency funding to drop-ins and day centres to ensure continued access to hygiene and support opportunities (pending approval of Report HSC20020);
- Strengthen shelter diversion and rapid rehousing initiatives to reduce the need for shelter and support people to remain in their homes;
- Plan for decommissioning of First Ontario Centre as temporary shelter;
- Reconfigure space within existing shelters to maximise capacity, promote social distancing and infection control;
- Fund Salvation Army Booth Centre to create single rooms which will allow it to return very close to the occupancy level at which it was functioning prior to the pandemic (pending approval of Report HSC20020);
- Negotiate long term leases with hotels to ensure capacity of those accommodated through this transition remain as established;
- Determine need for alternative sites based on the number of beds available through shelters and hotels;
- Identify a sustainable site and provider for Isolation Services; and,
- Develop a heightened focus on helping people experiencing homelessness find and maintain permanent housing. This includes leveraging all subsidies and programs contracted to help people experiencing homelessness become stabilized into a permanent housing situation.

Adaption such as the renovation of the Salvation Army Booth to include single rooms is an important step, but it is not a permanent solution. The focus needs to be on transformation of services to be more resistant to transmission of disease, provide greater dignity to clients and be more effective in helping them on their journey to permanent housing. Congregate settings are no longer appropriate for emergency shelter. Additionally, new forms of housing need to be developed to present an alternative to shelter. These new housing forms would focus on small, self-contained units that maximize privacy, reduce barriers to use and include appropriate supports.

In the mid-term, Housing Services will do the following:

- Decommission First Ontario Centre as a shelter;
- Implement plans to maintain existing number of shelter beds;
- Decommission Bennetto Recreation Centre as the isolation centre;
- Implement new Isolation Service model; and,
- Explore opportunities to use any affordable housing projects under construction to serve this population.

In the long term, Housing Services will do the following:

- Assist with the planning and development process for those shelters looking to significantly and permanently establish facilities that are supportive and resilient to both the housing and health needs of the population;
- Maximise the amount and design of permanent low barrier supportive housing to significantly increase the availability and suitability of units; and,
- Ensure the coordination and comprehensive integration of housing and health funding to promote effective, resilient and supportive housing forms.

As staff develop plans for each of the activities above, recommendations will be provided the Council for consideration. It is important to note that any emergency situations in the emergency shelter system may also be addressed through the City's Emergency Operations Centre if required.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Economic Prosperity and Growth

Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state of the art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None