



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 9, 2021
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Reaching Home: Canada's Homeless Strategy Community Homelessness Report 2019-2020, 2020-2021 (HSC21044) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Vanessa Parlette (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3863
SUBMITTED BY:	Edward John Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable

INFORMATION

The Community Homelessness Report 2021 covers the period from April 1, 2019 – March 21, 2021. The report is required to be completed by all Designated Communities receiving funding through the federal Reaching Home program. As the Community Entity responsible for administering Reaching Home funds, the Housing Services Division completed this report in collaboration with the Indigenous Community Entity. The report outlines annual performance outputs as well as progress towards achieving community outcomes.

Background

The Housing Services Division is the designated Community Entity (CE) responsible for local implementation of the Reaching Home strategy and related investments. This is done in partnership with the CE for the Reaching Home Indigenous funding stream, the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership (CHIL). CHIL is a collaborative of leaders

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

at Indigenous organizations who work to enhance and improve Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving community resources while amplifying Indigenous voices in Hamilton.

On April 1, 2019, the federal government launched Reaching Home as a revision to the former Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). The Reaching Home program is in effect April 1, 2019 until March 31, 2024. It is designed to assist local communities in adopting an outcome-based approach towards achieving a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness by 2028.

Under the Reaching Home directives, the City is mandated to achieve core requirements that help strengthen an evidence-based and integrated approach across the homelessness sector. These requirements are deeply aligned with Hamilton's Coming Together to End Homelessness Systems Planning Framework. This is a community strategy towards ending homelessness developed with diverse partners in 2019. Reaching Home and the Systems Planning Framework build on a foundation established through many years of collaboration.

Specifically, Hamilton is required by the end of March 2022 to have:

- Issued a Call for Applications process grounded in Housing First principles, ensuring that diverse services are organized and delivered in a coordinated manner to advance reductions in homelessness
- Developed and implemented a Coordinated Access System
- Implemented a Homelessness Information Management System (shared database) used by all funded homelessness sector partners
- Cross-streamed the planning and implementation of Coordinated Access with the Indigenous CE to support active participation of all service providers, appropriate culturally sensitive referrals, and advancement of Truth and Reconciliation goals.

As demonstrated below, Hamilton is well on the way to achieving these objectives. Together these objectives help to strengthen Hamilton's Homelessness Serving System with an emphasis on ending homelessness rather than managing it.

Progress Towards Meeting Reaching Home Requirements: Call for Applications

This requirement has been fulfilled.

To facilitate the delivery of Reaching Home funds, a Call for Applications (CFA) was undertaken in 2019. Based on the parameters of the Reaching Home funds, the CFA identified programs that, working together, align to create a homeless-serving system that ensures homelessness is rare, brief, and non-reoccurring. The CFA incorporated Reaching Home funding, Provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative,

and Home for Good funding to maximize all available resources in support of Hamilton's Coming Together to End Homelessness Systems Planning Framework.

In 2020, Council approved funding recommendations in the amount of \$7,576,159 to programs in four intervention streams: Assertive Housing-Focused Street Outreach; Prevention and Diversion; Transitional Housing; and Intensive Case Management (Report HSC20004). These investments more than double the number of permanent housing placements and in-home case management supports, from 350 program spaces to 732. Together these program streams make up a comprehensive system based on best practices for preventing and ending homelessness.

The CFA additionally applied an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion framework to ensure a homeless-serving system that accounts for the unique needs and considerations of women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples. With a 30% funding investment through the CFA to interventions serving single homeless women, Hamilton exceeds the National Housing Strategy's recommended 25% funding investment for women and girls.

In addition, the City of Hamilton annually allocates 20% of the federal CFA funding amount to Indigenous-led interventions. The overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples among those experiencing homelessness in Hamilton is rooted in historic trauma, oppression, racism, and discrimination along with ongoing processes of colonization and exploitation of Indigenous lands and populations. Dedicating 20% of federal homelessness program dollars is an arrangement that was developed in 2004 between the two CEs to respond to the disproportionate rates of homelessness among Indigenous people in our community.

A review of the funding relationship between the urban Indigenous community and the City of Hamilton was conducted in 2013. Under federal Reaching Home funding in April 2019, two Community Entities were extended: The Designated Community Entity (City of Hamilton) and the Indigenous Community Entity (CHIL). The Indigenous Community Entity is guided by ongoing engagement with Indigenous community members, staff of local Indigenous homelessness programs and services, and Indigenous community leadership, as well as the Indigenous Community Advisory Board and their CFP process. Through the CFA, the Homelessness Funding Implementation Group (HFIG) recommended an additional \$100,000 be designated to Indigenous-led programs, reflecting 20% of the Provincial programming funds included in the CFA. The total amount allocated in 2020-2021 to Indigenous-led homelessness interventions through the Indigenous Community Entity is \$1,054,469.

Progress Meeting Reaching Home Requirements: Coordinated Access and Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)

Hamilton has fulfilled 15 out of 18 of the Reaching Home minimum requirements for Coordinated Access and HMIS. Work on the remaining three requirements is on track to meet the full 18 requirements by March 2022.

Coordinated Access represents a community-wide approach to assessing and triaging individuals experiencing homelessness to effectively identify and connect them with the right range of supports. This helps move from an approach where clients are served by single organizations to one of shared accountability as a sector. The goal is to make sure everyone accesses their right to housing as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Hamilton has achieved the core components of Coordinated Access, building on decades of collaboration across the homeless serving sector. These achievements include:

- **Homelessness Management Information System:** Hamilton has fully implemented the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) version 4. This is a comprehensive data collection and case management system used by providers across the homelessness serving system to facilitate coordinated access. As of March 31, 2021, all emergency shelters and hotels, Intensive Case Management, Rapid Re-housing, Drop-in, diversion programs, and the YWCA transitional living program have been onboarded onto HIFIS, representing approximately 500 HIFIS users.
- **Common Intake:** Through an approach where “every door is the right one”, intake processes are standardized at every access point in the homeless-serving system. Individuals experiencing homelessness are assessed and asked for their consent to be added to Hamilton’s By-Name List. The By-Name List is a real-time record of everyone known to be experiencing homelessness.
- **Common Assessment:** Organizations across the homeless-serving sector use a common assessment tool to triage the needs of individuals. This information is documented in HIFIS to help prioritize the most appropriate types of housing resources and programs to best meet the needs of individuals.
- **Prioritization:** Community partners collaborate to prioritize individuals on the By-Name List based on level of need assessed against shared prioritization criteria. This helps ensure consistency and transparency in the way that individuals are connected to appropriate resources.

Collaboration with the Indigenous Community Entity

The Housing Services Division recognizes the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples among those experiencing homelessness in Hamilton is rooted in historic

trauma, oppression, racism and discrimination as well as ongoing processes of systemic colonization. Addressing Indigenous homelessness in Hamilton requires collaborating with and taking direction from urban Indigenous community leadership. Our collaboration with urban Indigenous leadership spans investment decisions, strategic planning, policy development, and service delivery.

Through several years of intentional relationship building, the Housing Services Division maintains strong working relationships with Indigenous organizations and coordinates in the areas above directly with CHIL.

It is important to note that historical funding inequities, housing affordability, discrimination, resource and capacity limitations impact Indigenous-led solutions and homelessness reduction goals. These conditions underscore the value and necessity of coordination, partnership, and effective use of resources. This is a shared commitment between CHIL and the Housing Services Division.

Progress on Achieving Community Outcomes

During the Community Homelessness Report (CHR) reporting period of April 2019 through March 2021, communities have confronted unprecedented challenges that have exacerbated the homelessness crisis. Availability of housing affordability resources is exceeded by demand, with programs highlighting extreme challenges in meeting housing targets without affordability supports. COVID-19 has compounded the existing crises of housing affordability, mental health and addictions, and income disparity.

In spite of these challenges, having core components of Coordinated Access firmly in place (common assessment, established referral policies, HIFIS use) has facilitated coordination among partners and allowed programs to adapt quickly in response to the pandemic.

Significant outcomes have been achieved despite the pressures above, including:

Increasing Supply of Affordable Housing

- The Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) Major Cities Stream Round 1 funding made available in Hamilton through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation was invested in four projects. This has resulted in 46 new units that will be dedicated to individuals from Hamilton's By-Name Priority List and Access to Housing waitlist, with a particular focus on women, urban Indigenous women, and seniors.
- Reaching Home COVID-19 funding was used to bring online 12 new units of permanent supportive housing for Indigenous households through a partnership between Indwell and Sacajawea Non-Profit Housing. This collaboration in

affordable housing between a non-Indigenous and Indigenous agency aims to set a new precedent for Hamilton's housing sector.

- Through the provincial Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program and provincial/federal capital funding, the YWCA has brought online 35 Rent-Geared-to-Income units for women. These will be populated from Hamilton's By-Name Priority List or Access to Housing waitlist through a YWCA affordable housing project. The project also has 15 affordable units priced at the low-end of market.

Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

- From January 2020 to July 2021, 447 households have been housed from Hamilton's By-Name Priority List, representing 998 unique individuals.
- To help address a growing crisis of housing affordability in Hamilton, housing allowances were provided to Intensive Case Management clients. Approximately 250 Canada-Ontario Housing Benefits were allocated, beginning with households in receipt of housing allowances that were expiring to support housing loss prevention.
- As new housing allowances become available, a minimum of 30% are dedicated to Indigenous programs, recognizing that systemic discrimination has resulted in over-representation of Indigenous people among those experiencing homelessness. The City also aims to ensure that a minimum of 25% of housing allowances are used to support housing placements for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine, and non-binary persons.
- In the spirit and action of reconciliation, the City of Hamilton continues to directly invest in Indigenous-led solutions. Respecting Indigenous autonomy, 20% of federal funds, including COVID-19 investments, are dedicated to Indigenous-specific interventions. These investments are selected by the Indigenous Community Advisory Board. Each intervention is developed and led by a local Indigenous agency.
- In early 2021, the City of Hamilton entered into a partnership with St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and the Canadian Mental Health Association Hamilton Branch on a pilot project to stabilize the housing of 15-20 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with high acuity mental illness and/or substance use disorder. The pilot integrates peer support, clinical health and addictions services, and City-funded Intensive Case Management program support and housing allowances, along with access to market rent units through CityHousing Hamilton.

Next Steps

Next steps to ensure fulfilment of all Reaching Home requirements include testing a new model of prioritization and right matching to programs. This model has been developed in collaboration with the Indigenous CE and in consultation with funded

partners. Testing of the prioritization model through the remainder of 2021 will lead to refinement and finalization in the new year. It should be noted that HIFIS 4 was introduced in October 2019, as such 2019-2020 data includes only five months. Therefore, limited trends and conclusions can be drawn. A more up-to-date and comprehensive snapshot through September 2021 is found in Report HSC20020(d).

Additionally, City staff are working closely with the Indigenous CE to foreground Indigenous knowledge and leadership in both mainstream and Indigenous Coordinated Access processes. This includes a dedicated strategy to ensure Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination with respect to data collection and use. This collaborative work is done in recognition of the underfunding of the Indigenous CE, which limits their capacity to participate in core activities at a pace in line with meeting federal timelines required of the Housing Services Division. Further resources have been sought through the Reaching Home Innovation Fund to support an Indigenous Data Liaison and a Cultural Capacity Training Program.

Additionally, despite the important gains reported above, there remains an ongoing need to align health resources with housing and homelessness investments. This is essential to enable Community Entities to provide adequate permanent housing with support options for high acuity chronically homeless individuals staying in shelters and encampments. The Housing Services Division is continuing to pursue health sector partnerships to explore innovative models for delivering wraparound supports in low barrier permanent housing.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report HSC21044: Reaching Home: Canada's Homeless Strategy
Community Homelessness Report 2019-2020,
2020-2021