



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee

FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services

MEETING DATE: September 12, 2013

**SUBJECT: Report CSSSJSSC13-009
Winter Weather Response**

PURPOSE

A report to recommend a pilot project from November 2013 to March 2014 for winter weather response for vulnerable people who cannot or will not access existing services; and to recommend modest enhancements to the Lighthouse Drop-in program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Joint Services Steering Committee endorse the recommendations outlined in Report CSSSJSSC13-009 dated September 12, 2013, of the Director of Community Services, as follows:

- a) That a winter weather response volunteer-led pilot program to operate from November 2013 to March 2014, with a City contribution of \$12,000, be approved.
- b) That an increase of \$25,000 to the Drop-In budget be approved, bringing the total to \$185,000 in 2014, to allow for additional paid staff hours on Saturdays through the winter, and to provide some rent to Murray St. Baptist Church for the Sunday program.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed \$10,000 contribution to the winter weather response pilot program and the \$25,000 increase to the Lighthouse Drop-In Centre budget can be accommodated within the Homelessness budget in 2013 and through a reinvestment of municipal Homelessness Prevention dollars in 2014.

BACKGROUND

Council Direction

Under new business at the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 3, 2013, Council directed staff as follows:

That a report on providing services to individuals not wishing/able to use shelters be provided no later than the Committee of the Whole meeting on September 3, 2013.

This report addresses concerns relating to the provision of a warming room service during extreme winter weather conditions.

Need for an alternative extreme winter weather service

The City, County, and the Province fund three emergency shelters in Peterborough with a total of 80 beds. The City also funds a day time drop-in program, called the Lighthouse Drop-in Centre operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA-HKPR), which provides some warming/cooling functions during extreme temperatures as well.

Even with these programs, however, there are instances where people in the community cannot or will not access existing emergency shelter services for various reasons including: complex physical and mental health issues, and/or addictions that may lead to violent or unsafe behaviour for other residents and staff. They are vulnerable throughout the winter months, but especially during extreme weather conditions.

Through the winter of 2012-2013, members of the community provided an alternative warm overnight place for this vulnerable group. Organizers were challenged by lack of a fixed location, exhaustion of the small number of volunteers, and a lack of coordination and communication related to the response. The experience also raised a number of other concerns including:

- insufficient resources to assess client needs and address risks;
- increased potential risks for both volunteers and clients;
- perceived duplication of existing shelter services;
- need to engage clients in planning better long term housing options and appropriate support services.

The Homelessness Support Services Coordinating Committee (HSSCC) established a working group that began meeting in May 2013 to explore potential models, program outline and costs. Social Services staff also conducted key stakeholder discussions to obtain further information on people's needs and ideas about a potential response.

Potential Models

The working group consists of staff from Social Services, St. John's Anglican Church, Peterborough County City Health Unit and CMHA-HKPR. The working group examined a number of other models and two streams emerged as potential options.

1. A **Volunteer-led model** would involve the City providing funds for a paid volunteer coordinator; space would be negotiated at a community location and the program would be operated by volunteers. This model is a lower cost option but still has potential for improved safety through training of volunteers and ensuring an effective connection to programs and services through referral mechanism.
2. An **Agency-led model** would involve paid staff on site at all times. Staffing costs, potential rent costs for space and potential infrastructure costs (sharps containers, phones, and accessibility) would be involved. This model provides for the greatest safety approach, higher cost and a formal system of support.

The working group obtained information about programs in other jurisdictions including the Toronto model that uses a temperature of -15 Celsius for implementation of their Extreme Cold Weather Alerts. Using this temperature threshold, an overnight program could be open for up to forty (40) nights during the winter.

Summary of Models and Estimated Costs (November 2013 – April 2014)

		Description	Estimated Cost
1	Collaborative Volunteer-led Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operated every night through winter by volunteers - not dependent on temperature • Out of the Cold provides the space and is the key lead related to facility and coordination • St. John's Anglican Church hires the Volunteer Coordinator and assists with volunteer recruitment 	\$7,500 (Volunteer Coordinator – Sept 24 – April 30) \$4,500 (supplies)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Peterborough provides funding for the cost of the Volunteer Coordinator and some supplies • CMHA-HKPR to provide in-kind training to volunteers (Mental Health 101, Non Violent Crisis Intervention, Safety Talk on Suicide) 	CMHA in-kind contribution Training \$5,000
2	Agency-led Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on cold weather alert of -15 Celsius • Estimated to be needed up to 40 nights • Staffing provided by community partners (CMHA, FourCAST, Emergency Shelters, Social Services) • Staffing through an “on call” roster 	Estimate approximately \$25,000 (2 staff, approximately 40 nights at 11 hrs each night)

Pros/Cons of above approaches

1. Volunteer Led Model

The vulnerable population accessing this overnight service are dealing with a combination of physical and mental health, addictions issues and potentially acquired brain injury. Some can and do access existing shelter services; however, at times circumstances prevent this (physical behaviour, violence). It is acknowledged that some of this vulnerable population does not necessarily want to connect to the system of professional services and wishes to have a safe and warm place to sleep, with no questions asked and limited accountability. This model will still rely significantly on community volunteers. Bringing a consistent approach to the volunteer schedule and ensuring sufficient accountability may be more difficult in this approach. This model can provide a response every night through the winter and so people will be better informed about this as a consistent option.

2. Agency-Led Model

Community agencies have expressed some concerns about being able to have sufficient staffing through an on-call approach. Some of the same staff may be required for a shift at their organization for some of their other 24/7 operations and would not be able to do so if they worked overnight at the Weather Response program. Many of the current organizations do not have a staff relief list. Also, adding shifts on top of regular business would put many staff into overtime. This model would provide professionally trained staff that may be better able to assess risk and may be better able to refer people to services for follow up through the day. It is a more expensive model and there may be some confusion in the community understanding when it is or isn't open.

Meeting with Community Members

Members of the working group met with a small number of community members that were involved with coordinating and working through some overnights last year. Concerns were expressed regarding a program that is attached to a specific temperature and that a program for this vulnerable group should run from November to April, with no dependence on temperature. Also, where possible, if someone is discharged from other services, and if there is an overnight program available, they need to be referred to that program.

Out of the Cold Program Expansion

As the working group was progressing through this work, they learned that the Out of the Cold program was making some plans for a program for the upcoming winter. The working group has spoken with the Out of the Cold leader in Peterborough. The Out of the Cold program has historically provided a free dinner every Saturday from November to March at the Stone School, owned and operated by the Catholic Diocese. This program has been extremely successful and is purely a volunteer-led program.

The Out of the Cold program has expressed an interest in hosting the winter overnight program at no cost for space. Details are still being worked out regarding operating time and whether or not the space would open based on temperature, or open every night from November to March 31, 2014. At this time, possible hours of operation are from 5:00 pm to 8:00 am. This program would also rely heavily on volunteers. Out of the Cold is interested in working with community partners on this project and to connect people accessing the service to professional services where possible. Confirmation of the specific physical location of the program is pending confirmation but will be in a downtown accessible facility.

It is proposed that a paid volunteer coordinator be provided to the Out of the Cold program to help with recruitment, training, scheduling and coordinating and to provide some interface between this volunteer program and the service system. There will be small amounts of food and beverage available at the location.

Outreach and Interface with other Programs/services

The creation of a winter response program is not intended to be a duplication of service, but rather an alternative service provision to people in the community that cannot and will not access other options. Individuals will be encouraged to work with staff of other organizations to stabilize housing at another location, since the numbers at the Out of the Cold program need to remain small to ensure the program's success.

Further discussion will occur through HSSCC to formalize an approach to outreach during cold weather advisories. Active planning with people known to be at risk by existing outreach and drop-in staff with people thought to be living outdoors for the purpose of developing immediate safety plans will occur. Altering normal hours of

operation by outreach staff and at the Lighthouse will be part of this response. Volunteer training will highlight other services intake processes and consent forms will be available to support referrals.

Enhancement to Lighthouse Drop-In Centre

In addition to the Winter Response program, the Lighthouse Drop-In Centre will continue to be an important resource to low income people and provide a warming function through the day. The Saturday volunteer program at St. John's will be replaced with staff led programming. In addition to the Saturday hours, CMHA-HKPR staff will continue to operate the drop-in opening earlier or closing later during cold weather. An additional \$25,000 for Saturday hours, additional costs of waste removal at St John's and to cover rent at Murray St. Baptist Church for Sunday program is required for this program enhancement.

Communication of Winter Weather Response

Once approved, the winter weather response program will be advertised using a variety of methods including a City media release and press conference. Brochures will be available at various locations including the Lighthouse Drop-In Centre and other service agencies. Updated information on the program will be provided to 211 and After Hours service.

Longer Term Planning

Through the operation of the pilot program, reports will be provided to the Social Services Division advising how many people are accessing services each night, types of situations volunteers are hearing about and coming across, any safety issues and the number of referrals made to other services. At the end of the pilot, the working group will reconvene to develop a report to the Homelessness Support Services Coordinating Committee on the outcome of the pilot and any potential recommendations for subsequent years.

Experience with the winter weather response program will also provide helpful information for longer term planning and is consistent with many of the directions outlined in the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan anticipated to be approved by Council later in 2013 including helping people transition out of homelessness and exploring a Housing First model for Peterborough.

SUMMARY

The proposed volunteer-led winter response program will strengthen the capacity of the community to provide a volunteer response to vulnerable individuals and improve outreach and linkages with other existing services.

A modest expansion of hours at the Lighthouse drop-in program for paid staff on Saturdays and for rental of Murray Street Baptist Church on Sundays will help fine-tune the existing Lighthouse operations. An evaluation of this winter's pilot will determine refinements needed for the 2014/15 winter.

Submitted by,

Ken Doherty, Director
Community Services Department

Linda Mitchelson
Manager, Social Services Division

Contact Name:

Dorothy Olver, Program Manager
Homelessness and Addiction Services
Social Services Division
Phone: 705-748-8830 Ext. 3635
Toll Free: 1-855-738-3755
Fax: 705-876-4620
Email: dolver@peterborough.ca