



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner, Community Services

Meeting Date: November 18, 2024

Report: Homelessness Budget Recommendations, Report CSSS24-026

Subject

A report to support the Homelessness items in the Draft 2025 Budget to maintain the homelessness system, including additional items to be considered for approval from the Social Services Reserve.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report CSSS24-026 dated November 18, 2024 of the Commissioner of Community Services as follows:

That Report CSSS24-026 be received for information.

Executive Summary

- As of October 8, 2024, By Name Data shows there are 331 individuals currently experiencing homelessness. This figure includes those staying in shelters, outside or in precarious housing circumstances. This demonstrates a high-need for homelessness programs and supports in the community.
- To maintain current 24/7 emergency shelter capacity and operations, increases in funding are required or the shelters will have to significantly reduce their current capacity and operations.
- Enhanced investments in the Homelessness system and Housing Continuum include Supportive Housing; Overnight-Drop In Program; and the Housing

Stability Fund to increase prevention/diversion/emergency shelter supports for vulnerable individuals in the community.

- The current draft 2025 Budget includes homelessness related budgetary increases to maintain the shelter system and provide supports to affordable housing. This report provides a description of these items as well as other homelessness related items that are currently not included in the draft budget for Council's consideration.

Background

The City of Peterborough is the Province's Service System Manager (SSM) for Housing and Homelessness, recognizing that local communities know where the investments can make the most impact. As the SSM, the City is responsible for planning, funding, and providing service options in collaboration with community partners. In practice, this means providing emergency shelter, funding supportive housing programs and building housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

In addition to municipal funding, the City is the flow-through for many provincial homelessness responses, while the United Way of Peterborough and District receives federal Reaching Home funding for homelessness programs. The City sits on the United Way committee which distributes this funding but cannot influence or control this funding.

Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal levels of government hold responsibility for human services such as social assistance, childcare, and housing. This is a strength of this system as it presents opportunities to prioritize local issues, create innovative solutions to local problems, and build strong partnerships. A weakness to this approach is that significant funding for these large and complex programs is dependent on the municipal tax base.

Despite these challenges faced by the municipality, the City works collaboratively with community partners on short-term interventions and longer-term strategies to support individuals in the community who are experiencing homelessness. The homelessness system is part of the larger Housing Continuum, where the goal is to create different options along the Continuum for everyone, recognizing that people move along the Continuum for various reasons. The City has maximized municipal, provincial and federal funding and continues to find creative ways to stretch the funding to provide options and services along this Continuum. This includes investing in programs such as the Wolfe Street Modular Bridge Housing Community; the Overnight Drop-In Program at Trinity and the Affordable Housing Project at 681 Monaghan Road.

While the hope is to build supportive housing to reduce emergency shelter costs, the scope of homelessness still requires significant investment into emergency shelter and smaller, more impactful programs along the Continuum in prevention/diversion and supportive housing.

By-Name Data

The By-Name Data helps community partners know every person experiencing homelessness by name, understand their unique needs, and prioritize them for the most appropriate and available housing.

As of October 8, 2024, there were 331 individuals currently experiencing homelessness. This figure includes those staying in shelters, outside or in precarious housing circumstances. Of those:

- 40% are chronically homeless, meaning that they have been homeless for at least 6 months within the last year.
- 49% are either high or very high acuity.
- 32 individuals are youth (aged 16-24)
- 76 individuals identify as Indigenous
- 66 individuals are unsheltered

Emergency Shelters

Within Peterborough, there are two main 24/7 emergency shelter operators in Brock Mission (Brock) and YES Shelter for Youth and Families (YES). In addition, One City operates a 6-month overnight shelter at Trinity Community Center (Trinity).

The Brock Mission operates the Brock Men's Shelter with capacity for 40 men aged 18 and over and Cameron House, with capacity for 12 women aged 18 and over. YES operates a Youth and Family Shelter, with a capacity of 15 beds for youth aged 16-24 years old; and a capacity of up to 15 family members spread throughout a number of rooms. In addition to providing emergency shelters, all locations also provide transitional housing through other funding.

The table below highlights the need for emergency shelter beds within the community, with a high number of beds accessed at all times across the system. The YES data isn't always reflective as family sizes impact the number of rooms that can be used; often displaying lower numbers than is the need.

Table 1: The following table outlines the core-funded 24/7 emergency shelters and their occupancy levels from January 1, 2024-October 8, 2024.

Shelter	Total Number of Beds	Average Occupancy	Unique Shelter Users
Brock Mission	40	90%	267
Cameron House	12	95%	80

YES Shelter for Youth and Families	30 (15 youth & 15 family)	67%	105
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It is important to note that with the Trinity Overnight Drop-In included, there were 632 unique individuals who accessed shelter for at least one night between January 1, 2024 and October 8, 2024. Again, this demonstrates the increased need for emergency shelter spaces within the homelessness system.

Both Brock and YES Shelters haven't received any significant funding increases outside standard increases to their core-funding to support their operations since 2021. Despite this, the main operational costs of the shelters have continued to increase along with all other agencies post-Covid, including costs of insurance, wages for staff, basic supplies etc. Staff have been engaging in financial reviews with the shelters and determined that because of the increased costs that the shelters are facing, additional core-funding of \$903,000 is needed to maintain current operations.

While the full implications of not increasing the funding cannot be finalized until the final funding amount is determined, both shelter providers have shared some initial concerns and implications that could be considered by each organization.

Brock will have to close Cameron House, the only shelter that supports women that isn't connected to domestic violence shelters. While Cameron House has a small capacity of beds, they are almost always full and provide a space for women to access shelter that might not want to access the same shelter space that also has beds for men. Cameron House could be re-purposed for transitional housing, but there would be no shelter options for women to access in the community other than the Trinity Overnight Program.

If YES's funding isn't increased, the shelter would require the agency to reduce the number of beds that are currently offered. Depending on the funding, this could mean reducing by 5 youth and 2 family spaces. In addition, the shelter could potentially have to reduce their operating hours, away from being open 24/7 to only operating after hours only. YES is the only shelter for youth and families, two very vulnerable demographics that require specialized supports. There are significant concerns that there would be no infrastructure and supports to step in and fill this potential gap.

Supportive Housing

Supportive Housing is an evidence-based and cost-effective solution for individuals who are chronically homeless and/or highly vulnerable because of long-term concerns such as: mental illness, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, substance use disorders, and chronic health conditions. Supportive Housing is housing and supports to empower individuals to live independently. There are numerous variations on the types of supportive housing – permanent or transitional; 24/7 supports to low-touch supports. The key to the success of Supportive Housing is physical housing units because Housing First can not exist without housing, first.

The City is the SSM for both Housing and Homelessness, allowing solutions to maximize resources across both Housing and Homelessness Programs (H&H). This includes leveraging rent supplements and potential-capital investment opportunities to support movement of individuals in the community through the Housing Continuum. The H&H teams have recently leveraged affordable housing units in the community to be connected to supports, allowing families to move out of shelter and into safe, affordable housing. By connecting supports to affordable housing, individuals are able to move into affordable housing and be connected to the supports to ensure their successful tenancy.

There are some current opportunities within the housing system that could be capitalized, but there is need for additional funding for supports. Again, this is to ensure that individuals are successful in their tenancies. The current Housing Continuum has bottle-necked, as transitional housing placements are all full. There are upcoming housing units with rent supplements that could be dedicated for individuals who are in transitional housing units, but the funding for supports isn't there. If there was additional funding for supports, more individuals could be moved from transitional housing into permanent housing; meaning individuals in the Modular Bridge Housing Community could move into lower-support transitional housing; and more individuals who are unsheltered can move into the Modular Bridge Housing. Additional funding for supports could help ease the bottle-neck and increase some flow-through the Housing Continuum. Staff have identified the need for \$250,000 to fund supportive housing for affordable housing opportunities, connected to the Coordinated Access System.

Additional Homelessness Items Not Included in 2025 Budget

This report has outlined core emergency shelter services and supportive housing to be considered as part of the 2025 budget. Staff are aware of additional homelessness needs in the community that could be considered and funded by Council from either the tax levy or the Social Services Reserve for 2025. These additional items are listed below.

Trinity Overnight Program – Year Round:

The Trinity Overnight Program (Trinity) opened on November 28th, 2023 and provides an overnight drop-in space for up to 45 individuals. The program operates from 8pm-8am and is funded for 6 months of the year as an emergency winter response. In addition to the Overnight Program, Trinity operates a Day Program that is funded year-round.

In Summer 2024, Council approved funding the 6-months of operations that was not covered, so that Trinity was open during the summer. As highlighted by One City in their Year in Review Report, Trinity saw an average of:

- 219 unique individuals accessed Trinity

- 47.5 guests per night (Due to the program being a drop-in, individuals can come and go as they please. In addition, some clients would give up their beds to friends who were outside so that they could get warm)
- 56.6% of guests spent more than 30 nights in the space

The current funding means that Trinity will be closed for 6 months, from May-October 2025, opening again in November 2025. With the current shelters at almost full capacity; with Trinity at capacity almost every night; with 632 unique individuals accessing shelter at least once in the year; the data is demonstrating the need for Trinity to continue operating during those 6 months. There is significant concern about where the 45+ individuals who are currently accessing Trinity will go, especially as the other shelters who could meet their needs are generally at capacity every night.

As a result of the increased need, Staff have identified that an additional \$264,000 be funded from Social Services Reserve to fund Trinity to fill in the 6-month gap, ensuring that there is additional bed space in the homelessness system year-round.

Housing Stability Increase:

While it's important to invest in emergency shelter responses to homelessness, it's equally essential to support funding prevention and diversion efforts. This can be done through the existing Housing Stability Fund (HSF), a program that supports individuals in the community to find housing quickly or stay housed and prevent homelessness. The most common issuances of HSF are to support arrears; first/last month's rent; beds and basic furniture. In effort to keep people housed, and the limited number of affordable rental options, it is important to invest in keeping people housed as the costs of alternatives are more expensive and create instability in people's lives.

With the increased cost of living, there has been a significant increase in the number of issuances and amount of HSF that is needed. The 2024 budget for HSF is \$1,850,000 and as of September 2024, the forecasted need is \$2,100,000. In 2024, there have been 1159 issuances of HSF to 981 unique individuals in the City and County. HSF is an extremely important preventative tool that can keep people out of emergency shelters and support them to secure affordable housing.

Social Assistance rates are staying the same and the impacts of the increased cost of living are forcing individuals to make some difficult choices, and at times, need a program like HSF to keep them housed. Faced with these realities, Staff expect the need for HSF to continue to increase. The current draft budget includes the existing \$1,850,000 in HSF to match the 2024 amount. Staff have identified that an additional \$360,000 in funding is necessary to meet demand for this program. The options for funding include tax levy or the Social Services Reserve. Without this additional funding to meet program demand, it is anticipated that the policy response would need to be either amending the maximum issuance amounts to ensure a lesser amount of funding can be distributed per request or maintain the existing issuance policy and simply operate on a first come first served model.

Increase in Capacity at Brock Mission Shelter:

During the shift in the homelessness system with Trinity and the Wolfe Street Modular Community in November 2023, Brock increased their 24/7 bed capacity from 32 beds to 40 beds to support more individuals in the community. To support the best practice of staff to client ratio of 1:15, Council approved a temporary increase in funding to support three staff at all times, keeping the bed capacity at 40 beds. This approval was temporary and ends December 31, 2024. Between January 1st 2024 and October 8th 2024, Brock supported an average of 36 clients per night. Previous to this, Brock was at 100% capacity, demonstrating the need to continue the additional capacity. Without the third shelter worker, Brock will have to reduce their bed capacity from 40 beds to 32 beds.

To keep shelter capacity at current levels, Staff have identified that an additional \$280,000 in funding is required for a third staff 24/7. Funding options would be tax levy or the Social Services Reserve.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Pillar: Community & Well-being

Strategic Initiative: Work proactively with local community partners to find an amicable, workable solution towards reducing homelessness, and mental health and addiction issues within our community

Engagement and Consultation

Social Services staff have met with affected agencies, in particular Brock Mission, YES Shelter and One City, to fully understand their budgets, their cost pressures, their operating costs, and their service alternatives if additional funding is not provided.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are budgetary and financial implications to the information provided in this report. The following items are currently included in the 2025 draft Budget, totaling \$1,250,000:

- \$1,000,000 to increase funding to Emergency Shelters core-funding to allow Brock Mission, Cameron House and YES shelter to maintain operations with a reduction to 32 beds at Brock Mission.
- \$250,000 for supports at affordable housing builds to support successful tenancies

The following items are not currently included in the 2025 Budget, but Staff have identified their importance and are requesting Council to consider:

- \$264,000 to enhance funding for Trinity Overnight Drop-In Program, funding 6-months of operations for Summer 2025 to allow full year service
- \$360,000 increase to the Housing Stability Fund program supporting prevention and diversion
- \$280,000 increase to Brock Mission to increase 24/7 capacity from 32 beds to 40 beds

The Social Services Reserve has a current uncommitted balance of \$4,091,851. While the Social Services Reserve does have a healthy balance, it is important to maintain a reserve in Social Services as it is often necessary to rely upon this reserve to allow significant projects to proceed. Staff are recommending using the Social Service Reserve to support one-time funding and not on-going operations of programs. The additional items not included in the 2025 Budget is an additional \$904,000 that could be funded from the Social Services Reserve if Council does not want to add them to the existing budget.

Staff Direction

If Council wishes to support the addition of the above items into the 2025 budget, staff recommend the following motions be used:

- a) That the Trinity Community Center Overnight Drop-In Program be funded \$264,000 to extend operations for 6 months next summer and be open year-round to be funded from the Social Services Reserve;
- b) That the Housing Stability Fund be increased by \$360,000 to support prevention and diversion to be funded from the Social Services Reserve;
- c) That \$280,000 be provided to Brock Mission for an additional worker to keep their bed capacity at 40 beds and not be reduced to 32 beds to be funded from the Social Services Reserve ;
- d) That the Commissioner of Community Services be delegated authority to execute such documents as are necessary to give effect to the foregoing terms and in forms acceptable to the City Solicitor.

Conclusion

Staff are recommending enhancements to the 2025 operating budget to provide the supports necessary to continue to provide funding for key programs of the homelessness system – emergency shelters; supportive housing; overnight drop-in and prevention/diversion. While these programs won't solve homelessness, all of these are key to providing options along the Housing Continuum for individuals who are experiencing homelessness in the community.

Submitted by,

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