

Clause 16 in Report No. 4 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on March 29, 2018.

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York Region's Homeless Count, April 17 - 20, 2018

Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendation contained in the report dated February 15, 2018 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. Council receive this report for information.
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Report dated February 15, 2018 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services now follows:

1. Recommendation

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

2. Purpose

This report outlines the Region's approach to meet the province's direction under the Housing Services Act, 2011 to count people experiencing homelessness.

3. Background

York Region is mandated to count people experiencing homelessness every two years starting in 2018

During the week of April 16, 2018, York Region will take part in a coordinated effort to measure homelessness across Ontario. This initiative is mandated by the Province of Ontario under the Housing Services Act, 2011 and requires each Service Manager for homelessness, under Ontario's Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative to enumerate.

As the Service Manager, York Region is required to:

- Engage in planning activities, including training, related to enumeration
- Partner and build relationships with Indigenous communities, homeless-serving agencies, service providers, and other stakeholders to develop an enumeration approach
- Develop and submit an Enumeration Plan to the Ministry of Housing
- Conduct enumeration as described in the Ministerial Directive and Ontario's Guidelines for Service Manager Homeless Enumeration
- Report enumeration results to the Ministry of Housing
- Share enumeration results with the public, the communities involved in enumeration and those that participated in enumeration

Enumeration will include people who are unsheltered, emergency sheltered and those that are provisionally accommodated. This includes people who are sleeping in emergency housing (shelters) or short-term transitional housing, moving from one friend to another because they have nowhere else to go (couch surfing) and people who are sleeping outdoors (rough).

Homeless enumeration will support the goals of preventing, reducing and ending chronic homelessness

In 2014, the Province's Poverty Reduction Strategy had a strong focus on ending homelessness and providing a stable foundation to help people rise out of poverty. Following the Poverty Reduction Strategy, new provincial legislation such as the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update and amendments to the Housing Services Act, 2011 was released that gave Service Managers direction to enumerate people experiencing homelessness every two years starting in 2018. The Province also committed to ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

4. Analysis and Implications

York Region's 2018 Homeless Count

Enumeration will be conducted during the week of April 16, 2018. York Region's 2018 Homeless Count (the Count) will take place over the course of four days and include people in emergency housing, on the streets and people experiencing hidden homelessness such as couch surfing or staying with friends and family because they have nowhere else to live.

During the week of enumeration, the Region plans to connect with as many people as possible that are experiencing homelessness by using a combination of two enumeration methods: Point-in-Time Count and Registry Week.

The Point-in-Time Count is a one day count planned for April 17, 2018. The Count will be conducted at emergency housing facilities and by canvassing known-locations where people experiencing homelessness might be staying. The known-locations are informed by a collective of front-line homeless-serving staff and agencies and people with lived experience.

The Point-in-Time count will be accompanied by a Registry Week, which is a multi-day count planned for April 17 to 20, 2018. Teams will visit locations such as libraries, food banks, drop-in centres and meal programs. By extending the Point-in-Time Count into a Registry week, we will connect with people who may have been missed on April 17, 2018 and have a better opportunity to engage with residents experiencing hidden homelessness.

A survey and a vulnerability assessment will be completed for each individual counted to identify people that are chronically homeless and have a high vulnerability. Information collected will include age, health, housing, duration and/or reasons for homelessness.

The findings will enhance system planning and inform program development

The survey results will help identify the characteristics and needs of people experiencing homelessness in York Region and establish contact with hard to reach populations. This information will also allow us to create a list of people who are homeless by name and level of need. This list will be used to prioritize people for supports and services, referrals and consultations, housing and housing stability services and measure the Region's progress towards reducing chronic homelessness.

The Region is working with the United Way Toronto and York Region to partner with and enhance relationships with homeless-serving agencies and other stakeholders

The Region has been working closely with the Province to prepare for this cross-Ontario count, and with United Way Toronto and York Region to learn from their experiences and gain insights and lessons from their 2016 count. Staff have prepared an engagement plan and have conducted best practice research to help inform the Region's approach to the Count.

Goals and objectives were developed to guide our work as follows:

- Goal – connect with as many people as possible that are experiencing homelessness and foster partnerships to prevent, reduce and end homelessness
- Objectives – understand the scope of need in our communities and the levels of vulnerability; gather quality baseline data to track progress and trends and inform policy and program delivery; and create a Priority List to help chronic homeless residents get the supports they need

A governance structure was established and the initiative is supported by a technical advisory group, street outreach team, many community agencies and partners, and people with lived experience of homelessness.

A Communication Plan has been developed to encourage participation and build awareness of homelessness in York Region

The communication plan has three main goals:

- To encourage people who are homeless in York Region to take part in the Count
- To encourage support for the Count
- To build awareness of homelessness in York Region

The communication plan includes a marketing campaign with posters, advertising, videos, social media and a media strategy to build awareness that homelessness exists and that York Region cares and is making a difference.

5. Financial Considerations

Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Funding has been allocated for Homeless Enumeration

The 2018 enumeration budget is \$568,232 gross (\$0 net). The Province has recognized that this new responsibility for the Region requires resources. Funding is provided by the Province through its Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

6. Local Municipal Impact

Trained teams will be conducting the Homeless Count across all municipalities to connect with as many people as possible and to better understand the level of vulnerability of persons experiencing homelessness in our communities. Data gathered will allow for service planning and delivery that more accurately reflects the needs and barriers facing homeless and at-risk residents in each community. The findings will be communicated publically and will be used to improve and expand the range of supports across the Region. This will benefit vulnerable residents in all nine local municipalities.

7. Conclusion

York Region's 2018 Homeless Count will connect with as many people as possible throughout the Region. Visiting Emergency Housing facilities and drop-in centers, and meeting people at meal programs, in libraries and on the streets, will give us a better understanding of the scope of homelessness in our communities. This approach is based on best practice, and will result in quality data upon which to track progress, trends. The data will help us provide better services and supports to residents experiencing homelessness, as well as to prioritize individuals with the highest need to help them get the supports they need to become housed more quickly.

A comprehensive report will be prepared following extensive data analysis and evaluation. These findings will be shared with Council in early 2019.

Information collected through the enumeration will support the goal to end chronic homelessness by allowing us to better understand who is homeless and why, so that the right supports can be targeted now and in the future.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager of Social Services at 1-877-464-9675 Extension 72150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

February 15, 2018

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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request