

## **Progress Report - Service Enhancements for Persons Experiencing Homelessness**

Presented To:	Community Services Committee
Meeting Date:	June 20, 2022
Type:	Managers' Reports
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Recommended by:	General Manager of Community Development

### **Report Summary**

This report provides a resolution regarding continued operation of a low barrier shelter and provides a progress update on the service enhancements for persons experiencing homelessness that were implemented as approved by Council on November 23, 2021.

### **Resolution**

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury enters into a sole source funding agreement with Elizabeth Fry Society of Sudbury to continue the operation of a low barrier shelter for women and gender diverse people from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 as outlined in the report entitled "Progress Report - Service Enhancements for Persons Experiencing Homelessness" from the General Manager of Community Development, presented at the Community Services Committee meeting on June 20, 2022.

### **Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)**

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan in the area of Quality of Life and Place as it aligns with the Population Health Priorities of Indigenous Youth, Mental Health, Housing, and Healthy Streets by delivering Housing Navigator supports. This report has no relationship to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

### **Financial Implications**

These enhancements are funded through Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding and Federal Reaching Home funding.

### **Background**

During the Covid-19 pandemic the number of people living unsheltered in Sudbury increased. This was impacted by the closure of in person public services, loss of affordable housing, and the opioid crisis. In particular, the number of people living in encampments in the downtown core increased significantly. To develop a coordinated, supportive, and successful approach to addressing encampments, staff engaged

with an encampment consultant from OrgCode Consulting Inc., President and CEO Iain De Jong. The Greater Sudbury Encampment Response Guide was presented to Council on October 12, 2021 and discussion continued at the meeting of October 26, 2021. Several possible solutions and enhancements were presented within the Guide. At that meeting a motion was passed for a report to follow to provide an assessment of the potential for increasing the availability of appropriate indoor shelter for vulnerable population members.

Staff returned to Council on November 23, 2021 with the report: "Service Enhancements for persons Experiencing Homelessness." Options for the implementation of additional shelter beds for women as well as additional warming center spaces were provided. In addition, options for further housing-based solutions through a variety of investments were presented. By resolution, staff were directed to work collaboratively with community partners to implement the solutions for housing-focused supports within the identified funding and proceed with the steps necessary for the operation of a women's shelter.

### Safe Harbour House

On January 24, 2022 a nine-bed low barrier emergency shelter for women and gender diverse people aged 19 and older opened on Kingsmount Blvd. in Sudbury. Operated by Elizabeth Fry Society of Sudbury, the program operates overnight from 9:00 pm to 8:00 am. Clients are provided with a warm safe bed, access to showers and laundry, as well as supportive staff to offer housing focused solutions. As part of the Coordinated Access System, clients can be added to the By-Name List for access to housing supports that meet their needs. The program operated collaboratively with the Off the Street shelter, Cedar Place Women and Family Shelter and 199 Larch Street Warming Centre to receive appropriate referrals. Transportation to and from the downtown core is provided through a taxi agreement and bus tickets.

Between January 24, 2022 and April 30, 2022, there were 47 unique individuals who used Safe Harbour House program. The bed occupancy rate for this period is 72%. The additional nine beds within the emergency shelter system have created bed availability within the other shelter programs including the Off the Street low barrier shelter which provides for adults of all genders. On November 1, 2021 the emergency shelter system of 65 beds was operating at 94% capacity and by May 1, 2022 it was operating at 77% capacity with 74 beds. Women and gender diverse people requiring low barrier shelter services have reported feeling safe at this location.

The cost to operate this program has been \$53,324 per month, and the current agreement is scheduled to end on June 30, 2022. Elizabeth Fry Society of Sudbury has indicated a willingness to continue to operate this program for an additional year. Staff recognize a need to continue operating this shelter and have identified available funding through the Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program and Federal Reaching Home Program.

### Flex Funds

An amount of \$100,000 annually was approved for flex funds to support persons wishing to relocate, return to home communities for family reunification, or for situations that cannot be easily resolved by existing funding sources. Funding under this program was made available through community homelessness sector partners and through the City's Social Services Client Navigators.

Between December 1, 2021, and May 5, 2022, 31 people have been supported through flex funds. Less than \$6,000 has been expended for these supports to date.

### Bridge Housing

A local motel is being used to temporarily house people who are homeless, who have confirmed housing and are waiting to receive keys for their unit. Between July 2021 and May 5, 2022, there have been 35 individuals who have moved into permanent housing from bridge housing, and nine individuals in bridge housing as of May 5, 2022. This initiative frees up shelter space for people who require more support while going through the housing process.

### Conversion of GSHC Two-Bedroom Units to One-Bedroom

An additional 10 two-bedroom Greater Sudbury Housing Corporation (GSHC) social housing units were renovated to create one-bedroom units at a cost of approximately \$7,853 per unit. All renovations are complete, and units have been offered to tenants through the social housing waitlist process including those on urgent status list. In total, 30 units were converted to better suit the social housing wait list and ease pressures on the shelter system.

### Continued Allocation of Housing Allowances

An additional amount of \$150,000 annually has been allocated to the Homelessness Network to assist participants of the Housing First Program with affordable access to private market rents. These allowances have slowly been rolling out to participants since November 2021. The Housing First program supports high acuity individuals from the By Name list who have experienced chronic homelessness by supporting them to find and maintain permanent housing while integrating into the community. Being able to access a private market unit with a housing allowance allows for client choice of where to live in the community and prevents funneling all clients into social housing buildings.

### Master Lease to a Private Landlord

As approved by Council in November, an Expression of Interest was posted in November 2021 seeking a private landlord within the City of Sudbury to come forward with an opportunity for a master lease program with an objective to support people to resolve their homelessness. As described in the Encampment Response Plan, this can be actioned through a variety of investments which includes master lease to a private landlord 20 bachelor and one-bedroom units, up to a maximum of \$200,000 per year for rent and risk reduction (e.g., assistance to help pay for any damages caused by a subleasing tenant) be allocated. Ideally, these units are to be scattered across multiple buildings. Master leasing accelerates access to housing and ensures that if a unit becomes vacant that it can be filled by another person that is currently experiencing homelessness. Master leasing is an approach that has been used by other communities in the delivery of Housing First programming; a Housing First program provides support for people to get and remain housed with intensive case management supports.

Unfortunately, there was only one applicant through this process, and their submission did not meet the required criteria. The housing market is quite competitive and there is little capacity available to meet the request. The funding will be reallocated to support community partners and address gaps in the homeless and shelter system. Staff will continue to communicate with landlords and monitor the market for future opportunities to pursue this initiative.

### Client Navigators

In winter 2021, two permanent full time Client Navigators were hired through the reallocation of existing FTEs. These staff have been collaborating with community outreach, the Homelessness Network and community partners to assist vulnerable populations find housing, stay housed and to connect with necessary wraparound services. Client Navigators are also members of the Municipal Outreach Encampment Team (MOET) and regularly visit encampment sites throughout the city. These positions have been key in supporting the Encampment Response Plan and helping to create capacity in the shelter system. Further, they collaborate with staff in the transitional housing program to help vulnerable persons acquire mental health and addiction support services when they are ready.

Under a homelessness prevention approach, two additional temporary client navigator positions have been added using funding from the Social Services Relief Funding Phase 5. These navigators will provide additional supports to persons recently housed within social housing units who require additional supports to retain successful tenancy.

## Social Services Client Navigators

In winter 2021, two permanent full-time Social Services Client Navigators were hired. They have been collaborating with community outreach, the Homelessness Network and community partners to assist vulnerable populations find housing, stay housed and to connect with necessary wraparound services. They are also members of the Municipal Outreach Encampment Team (MOET) and regularly visit encampment sites throughout the city. These positions have been key in supporting the Encampment Response Plan and helping to create capacity in the shelter system. Further, they collaborate with staff in the transitional housing program to help vulnerable persons acquire mental health and addiction support services when they are ready.

Under a homelessness prevention approach, two additional client navigator positions have been added to provide additional supports to persons recently housed within social housing units who require additional supports to remain housed. Which is funded through SSRF Phase 5 funding.

## Overall Impact

The addition of the emergency shelter beds, and service enhancements has supported the reduction of persons residing outdoors in encampments and increased availability of emergency shelter beds overall.

Within encampments across the City of Greater Sudbury, the first count on October 18, 2021, recorded 165 individuals and 69 tents across six locations. As of April 29, 2022, there were 11 people identified living in encampments within Greater Sudbury across eight locations.

The By-Name List was implemented in July 2021 as part of the Coordinated Access System. This is a real-time list of people experiencing homelessness in our community. It includes every individual who is homeless and consents to having their name added to the list to receive supports. Through Coordinated Access System, people who are experiencing homelessness will be matched to the level of housing and/or supports that best meets their needs. As well, the By-Name List provides in real time, how many people are homeless, how many people were housed, and how well staff and community partners are reducing the number of people who are homeless in Greater Sudbury.

In October 2021 there were 93 people on the By-Name List of people who were experiencing homelessness in Greater Sudbury, and efforts were being made to reach out and connect with people to be added to the list. As of May 5, 2022, 279 people have been added to the By-Name List. Of the 279 individuals, 112 have been housed and 41 have been deactivated from the list due to a change in circumstances. There are currently 126 actively homeless on the list. On the By-Name List to date, eight people been housed and have since lost their housing.

## **Next Steps**

Over the past few years, staff attempted multiple times to secure vendors to provide shelter and warming centre services with little interest taken by providers. Given the willingness and success of Elizabeth Fry Society to continue operating a low barrier shelter for women and gender diverse people, staff are requesting Council approval to enter into a sole source funding agreement with Elizabeth Fry Society of Sudbury to continue the operation of this shelter from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, to be funded through the Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding and Federal Reaching Home Program funding. A sole source purchase is recommended as there have been no qualified applicants responding to request for proposals (RFP) for similar services over the past three years. A report will be brought back to Community Services Committee towards end of 2022 providing information on the future of these programs.

## Resources Cited

Council Presentation and Report: City of Greater Sudbury Encampment and Action Plan, October 12, 2021  
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=42286>

Council Report: Service Enhancement for Persons Experiencing Homelessness, November 23, 2021  
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=42563>

Resolution CC2021-328, Service Enhancements For Persons Experiencing Homelessness, November 23, 2021  
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=42571>