

Extreme Cold Weather Alert Program Update

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Report Summary

This report provides information regarding an update on the Extreme Cold Weather Alert Program along with current emergency shelter trends.

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

The report supports Council's Strategic Plan around Quality of Life and Place as it aligns with Population Health Priorities of Indigenous Youth, Mental Health, Housing and Healthy Streets by providing options for services for individuals that are homeless in the community. This report has no relationship to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

Extreme Cold Weather Alert Program

The Extreme Cold Weather Alert (ECWA) Program is an initiative to protect those who are most vulnerable to intensely cold weather conditions. It is funded by the City of Greater Sudbury and administered by the Homelessness Network, in partnership with L'Association des Jeunes de la Rue. The program runs from November 1 to March 31 each year and has been in operation since 2008.

The ECWA is a short-term emergency response which alerts shelters and social service agencies to increase drop-in centre hours and outreach services for the next 24 hours during periods of intense cold. The program encourages people on the street to voluntarily access shelters and services. Individuals who may be at risk due to low temperatures in their homes are also eligible to access services.

L'Association des Jeunes de la Rue monitors the Environment Canada website daily and calls an ECWA for the next 24 hours when one of the following triggers is expected:

- a daily low of minus 15 degrees Celsius without a wind-chill,
- a daily low of minus 20 degrees with a windchill,
- a wind-chill temperature that requires a caution for outdoor activity,
- a Winter Storm Watch, or
- a Winter Weather Warning

Since 2015, there has been an average of 55 ECWA days called per season. The annual budget for this program is \$90,000 per year of which approximately half is funded by with upper levels of government.

Under a community partnership agreement with the Homelessness Network, agencies will implement or extend the following community services:

Hot Line: L'Association des Jeunes de la Rue will operate an overnight phone line to direct callers to appropriate services and to take calls from concerned citizens.

Extended Outreach services: L'Association des Jeunes de la Rue (Community Outreach Program) will provide overnight services to make contact with people on the street and to transport individuals to shelters, warming centre or other safe places. Outreach workers will be equipped with extra clothing, blankets, and coffee for those who choose not to access an indoor space.

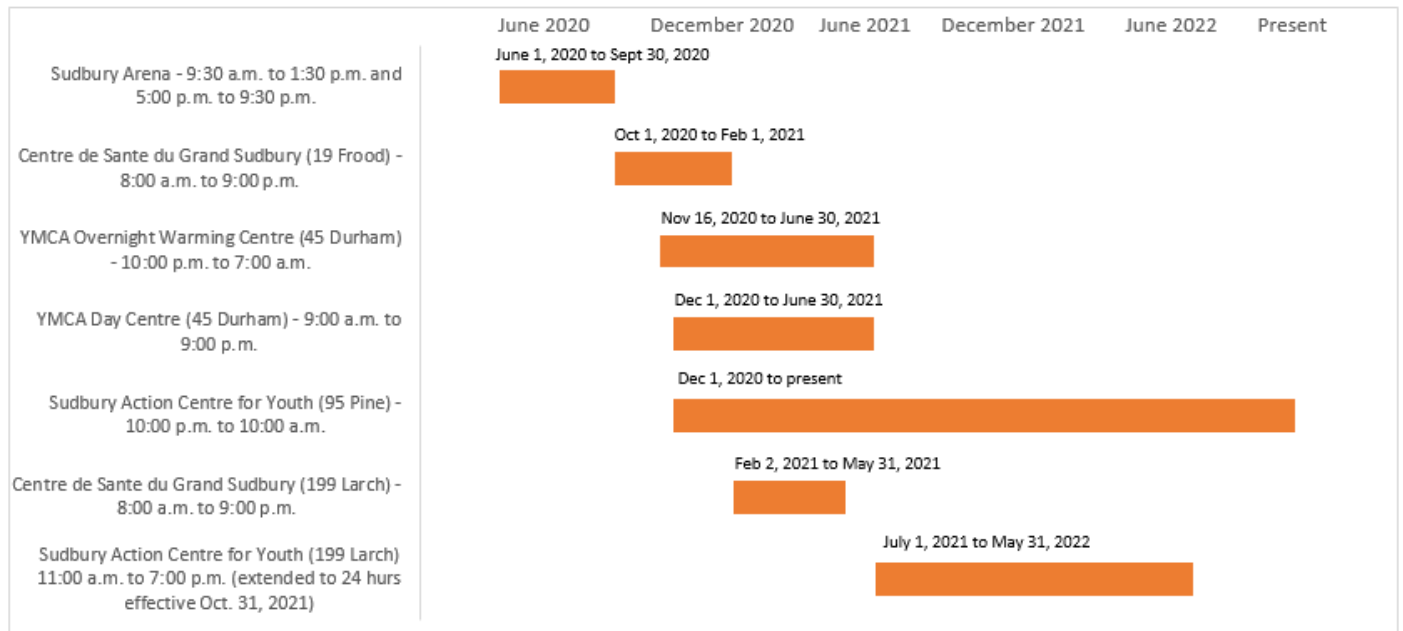
Emergency Warming Centre: An overnight warming centre is put in place with a local community partner from 8:00 pm to 8:00 am. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Elgin Street Mission or Samaritan Centre operated the ECWA warming centre. An ECWA warming centre was not implemented during the COVID pandemic as enhanced warming centre services were already in place. At the time of writing this report, the Homelessness Network is finalizing an agreement with the Samaritan Centre for the provision of overnight warming centre services for the 2022/2023 season.

Enhanced Warming Centre Services during COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the City of Greater Sudbury's State of Emergency declared on April 6, 2020, various public and social services providers closed to the public. There was an immediate and urgent public health and safety need to provide persons experiencing homelessness with access to basic needs such as access to washrooms, drinking water, hand washing stations and shelter from the elements.

The City of Greater Sudbury responded quickly to work with community partners to implement enhanced warming/cooling centre services to meet this need. This was made possible through additional Social Services Relief funding provided by the Province.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic several agencies and locations were involved in providing this service, as demonstrated in the graph below.

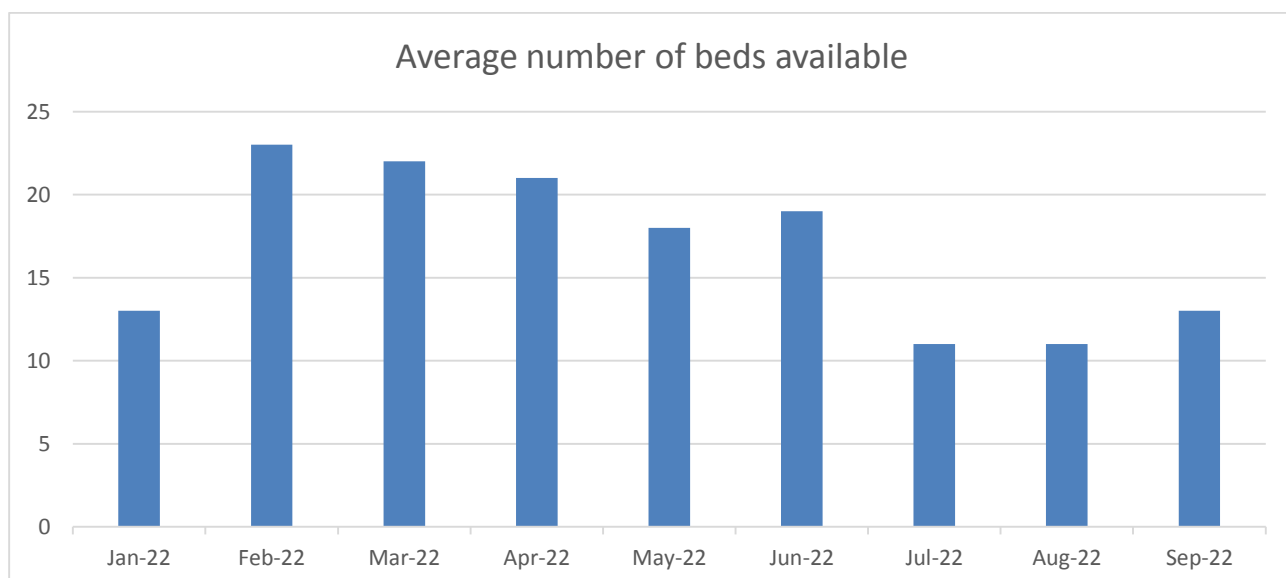


As the State of Emergency has been lifted and Public Health restrictions regarding services during the COVID-19 pandemic have loosened, most public and social services have re-opened to pre-pandemic levels of service. This includes the Samaritan Centre, Elgin Street Mission and Blue Door Soup Kitchen, public libraries, Ontario Works office, and other community service providers. The only remaining enhanced warming centre open at this time is the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth, located at 95 Pine Street, which is still required given the absence of a permanent emergency shelter for youth. The final Social Services Relief Funding Phase Five was issued in April 2022, with no further enhanced funding expected from the Province.

Current Shelter Capacity Trends

There are currently 75 emergency shelter beds within the City of Greater Sudbury. Between January 1, 2022, to September 14, 2022, there have been an average of 17 beds available per night.

Current shelter capacity trends can be found in the table below:



The overall number of emergency shelter beds was increased by ten in January 2022 with the addition of the Safe Harbour House program operated by Elizabeth Fry Society, as approved by Council in November 2021 under the Report entitled “Service Enhancements for Persons Experiencing Homelessness”. Council also approved other housing-focused supports outlined in the report such as flex funding, bridge housing, and additional housing allowances which remain in place to provide housing-focused solutions.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to support the Homelessness Network in finalizing a warming centre partner and location for the ECWA 2022/23 season. Emergency shelter capacity will be monitored daily, and housing-focused support will continue to be offered to persons experiencing homelessness.

Resources Cited

Service Enhancements for Person Experiencing Homelessness

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=42563>