

Safe Harbour House Update

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Report Summary

This report provides an update regarding the Safe Harbour House Emergency Shelter Program operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Northeastern Ontario.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

This report supports the City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan in alignment with the objective to Create a Healthier and More Vibrant Community, and goal 5.1 to Advance Population Health Agenda, delivering City-led goals from the Population Health Call to Action 2018-2028, including priorities of Indigenous Youth, Mental Health, Housing, and Healthy Streets by delivering emergency shelter support to persons who are experiencing homelessness.

This report has no relationship to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

Financial Implications

The service enhancements described in this report will be delivered within the existing operating budget.

Background

As part of the Report entitled “Service Enhancements for Persons Experiencing Homelessness” presented to Council on November 23, 2021, through resolution CC2021-328, staff were directed 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.*” On January 1, 2022, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Northeastern Ontario opened a 10-bed emergency shelter program called Safe Harbour House, in alignment with the Greater Sudbury Encampment Strategy.

The low barrier program for women and gender diverse people 18+ operated nightly between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. in a leased building from the Canadian Mental Health Association-Sudbury/Manitoulin.

The funding for the program flowed through the City from the Federal Reaching Home allocation. In 2024, there were 167 individuals receiving services, for a total of 3,273 bed nights and an 85% occupancy rate. In 2024, there were nine higher needs individuals who stayed at the shelter for more than 90 days.

Relocation of Safe Harbour House- 307 Cedar

To increase shelter capacity and provide transitional housing, in November 2024, the City of Greater Sudbury purchased a building located at 307 Cedar Street, which was the former home of the Foyer Notre Dame Youth shelter, which closed in March 2020. The Safe Harbour House Emergency Shelter Program was relocated to this building in December 2024, which facilitated an increase of 16 shelter beds, moving from 10 beds to 26 beds. A portion of the additional beds were allocated to female and gender diverse youth aged 16 to 24 years, meeting a gap for youth shelter beds in the community. As of March 2025, they have operated at 81% occupancy rate.

Specifically noting opportunities for the Safe Harbour House, the Roadmap to End Homelessness by 2030, recommends creating additional transitional housing spaces in the community for priority populations, including women fleeing violence (action item 3.5) and to transition existing emergency shelter spaces to transitional housing models, where possible (action item 3.3). Transitional housing is a steppingstone between homelessness and permanent stable housing, through the provision of in-home support services to help develop the necessary skills to be able to live independently. Stays in transitional housing programs are typically longer than emergency shelter stays, with guidelines that range from three months to three years.

As part of the business case approved through the 2024 budget process, resolution FA2023-75-A23 provided staff with direction to enter into a three-year agreement with Safe Harbour House for continued shelter services, with flexibility for transitional/shelter services, as needed, and extended hours, effective April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2027, with two optional extension years.

In alignment with the Roadmap, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Northeastern Ontario has partnered with the City to develop an option to shift Safe Harbour House to a hybrid transitional housing/emergency shelter model. The proposal outlines plans to offer six transitional housing beds under a 24-hour model, with 15 beds remaining for overnight emergency shelter use. A review of the Safe Harbour House Emergency Shelter Program utilization demonstrates the need for transitional housing services for women and gender diverse people that provides life skills programming and greater stabilization, specifically for those on the By-Name List who score in the high acuity range. Many individuals who access the emergency shelter program present with complex mental health and substance use disorders and are victims of violence from encampments or through sex trafficking. The reduction of total bed capacity (overall reduction of five beds) is the result of emergency shelter rooms holding two occupants, while transitional housing rooms will only have one occupant. The program would provide daytime in house life skills such as healthy relationships, personal finances, managing a home, cooking, and self-esteem building. As well, participants would be connected to community partners for physical and mental health care.

The total operating cost for a 24-hour operation of a transitional/emergency shelter hybrid model from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, is \$1,418,000 and is fully funded through the Federal Reaching Home funding envelope.

Next Steps

The success of this hybrid transitional housing/emergency shelter model will be monitored by staff and updates will be provided through the semi-annual Roadmap to End Homelessness by 2030 update reports. The Elizabeth Fry Society will continue to advocate to their respective funder to cover a portion of the operating costs for this program to reduce the funding received through the Federal Reaching Home funding.

Resources Cited

[Council Report - November 23, 2021 - Service Enhancements for Persons Experiencing Homelessness](#)

[City Council Meeting - May 28, 2024 - Roadmap to End Homelessness by 2030](#)

[Council Report - December 10, 2024 - Roadmap to End Homelessness by 2030 Update](#)