

Request for Decision

Out of the Cold Pilot Program - Update

Presented To: Community Services
Committee

Presented: Monday, Aug 11, 2014

Report Date Wednesday, Jul 30, 2014

Type: Routine Management
Reports

Recommendation

WHEREAS the City of Greater Sudbury partnered with the Salvation Army to provide an Out of the Cold Pilot Project from February 19th, 2014 to March 31st, 2014; and

WHEREAS a review of this pilot project has determined it successfully met a need within the Community; and

WHEREAS there is a need to continue to provide a shelter program for persons who are under the influence or otherwise are unable to access emergency shelter programs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Greater Sudbury direct staff to explore partnership and funding opportunities to fund such a program; and

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury issue a Request for Proposals to identify partners who are interested in providing this service; and

THAT staff report back to City Council on the Request for Proposals and funding opportunities in the fall of 2014.

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Gail Spencer
Coordinator of Shelters and
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Digitally Signed Jul 30, 14

Division Review

Luisa Valle
Director of Social Services
Digitally Signed Jul 30, 14

Recommended by the Department

Catherine Matheson
General Manager of Community
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Recommended by the C.A.O.

Doug Nadorozny
Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Jul 31, 14

Finance Implications

There are no financial implications identified at this time as the new program developed should be funded by available Federal and Provincial funding for homelessness initiatives.

Background

The Elgin Street Mission is a drop in centre located at the Samaritan Centre, 344 Elgin Street, Sudbury. The Mission provides food, clothing, shower and laundry facilities, and counseling and spiritual direction to homeless and vulnerable persons in the community.

For the past several years, the Elgin Street Mission operated as a warming centre open overnight, every

night from approximately December 1st to March 31st. During the winter of 2012/2013, the Elgin Street Mission reported 15 to 25 persons utilizing the facility every night.

In 2013, the Elgin Street Mission made the decision to reduce their hours of operation and remain open overnight only during an Extreme Cold Weather Alert, as they were unable to provide an appropriate place for persons to sleep.

Out of the Cold Pilot Program

In response to this change, the City partnered with the Salvation Army to provide an Out of the Cold pilot project that ran from February 19th, 2014 to March 31st, 2014. The Salvation Army utilized available space at their downtown facility at 146 Larch Street, adjoining the Men's Emergency Shelter Program. The Salvation Army was able to provide a facility that met fire and safety codes, experienced personnel, and organizational support. The pilot project was funded through the Provincial MCSS one time funding allocation.

The Out of the Cold Program was open from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am every evening and provided temporary cots and a safe, warm environment for anyone who needed a safe place to sleep. The program was open to both men and women and had no registration or eligibility requirements. Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol were allowed access to the program, as long as the level of intoxication did not pose a serious risk to their health and safety, in which case they were referred to the detox program. No alcohol or drugs were allowed within the facility. Two support staff and one security person were available at all times.

Over the course of the pilot project, there were a total of 417 visits. The maximum number of persons on any given night was 19 with an average of 10 persons sleeping there each night. The number of people accessing the program climbed steadily over the course of the pilot, as the program became better known within the Community.

Persons accessing the program stated they used it for the following reasons:

- a safe place to sleep
- weather conditions
- they were under the influence
- they were barred from other services

Persons expressed their gratitude for providing a safe, warm place to sleep.

Overall, the Out of the Cold Pilot Project successfully filled a gap that has been identified in the existing services that are currently provided to homeless persons in our Community. Service was provided to the most vulnerable of the homeless population who may not access existing services for a variety of reasons such as being barred, having no identification, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, not meeting other eligibility criteria, etc.

Community Priorities

In the City of Greater Sudbury's Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, Community Priority #3 states:

"There is a need to strengthen approaches to preventing homelessness, increase the diversity of emergency shelter options and support individuals with multiple barriers in obtaining and maintaining their housing."

An action item for this priority was to: *Review eligibility criteria for existing shelters and/or reallocate funding to ensure emergency shelter accommodation meets the diverse range of needs, including emergency accommodation that does not have a zero alcohol tolerance.*

The North East Local Health Integration Network (NELHIN) recently hosted a Value Mapping Session and Kaizan event with over 17 partner agencies to identify priorities for addressing the needs of persons who are chronically homeless, have substance abuse issues, and are high users of the emergency department services. One of the priorities identified is as follows:

"Establishing an emergency shelter that allows for persons who are under the influence and is a safe place for all."

Existing Emergency Shelter Programs

The City of Greater Sudbury currently partners with the Salvation Army and L'association des jeunes de la rue to provide a total of 69 emergency shelter beds for homeless men, women, families and youth within our Community.

The City of Greater Sudbury has conducted a review of current eligibility requirements and has worked with the service providers to begin to remove barriers and ensure that accessibility to the emergency shelter programs is as flexible as possible.

Given the positive changes that have occurred, it still remains that persons who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol are not permitted within the existing emergency shelter programs.

Next Steps and Recommendations

The City of Greater Sudbury will continue to explore partnership and funding opportunities with the NELHIN and other service providers, to develop an Out of the Cold Program that is available for any person to provide a temporary, safe, warm environment to sleep.

The City of Greater Sudbury will issue a Request for Proposal to identify partners who are interested in providing this service, and will report back to City Council in the fall of 2014.