

## Request for Decision

### Homelessness Initiatives - Warming Centre Update

Presented To: Community Services  
Committee

Presented: Monday, Feb 03, 2014

Report Date Monday, Jan 27, 2014

Type: Managers' Reports

#### Recommendation

WHEREAS the City of Greater Sudbury has an Extreme Cold Weather Alert (ECWA) program to protect those who are most vulnerable to intensely cold weather conditions, and;

WHEREAS the Elgin Street Mission previously remained open overnight every evening during the winter months to provide for the needs of the homeless, and;

WHEREAS the Elgin Street Mission has decided to remain open overnight as a warming centre only during an Extreme Cold Weather Alert (ECWA), and;

WHEREAS existing emergency shelter programs are established and provide service for persons who are homeless, and;

WHEREAS a gap has been identified for vulnerable people who do not meet the criteria to stay at the existing emergency shelter programs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Greater Sudbury explore the extension of services at The Salvation Army as necessary within the approved budget.

#### Signed By

##### **Report Prepared By**

Gail Spencer  
Coordinator of Shelters and  
Homelessness  
*Digitally Signed Jan 27, 14*

##### **Division Review**

Luisa Valle  
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##### **Recommended by the Department**

Catherine Matheson  
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##### **Recommended by the C.A.O.**

Doug Nadorozny  
Chief Administrative Officer  
*Digitally Signed Jan 27, 14*

#### Finance Implications

There are no financial implications as any costs can be covered through one-time Provincial funding.

## Background

The Elgin Street Mission is a drop in centre located at The Samaritan Centre at 344 Elgin Street. They provide food, clothing, shower and laundry facilities, counseling and spiritual direction. During an Extreme Cold Weather Alert (ECWA) they act as a 24 hour warming centre.

For the past several years the Elgin Street Mission chose to remain open overnight from approximately December 1st to March 31st every winter. During the winter of 2012/2013 the Mission reported anywhere

from 15 to 25 persons utilizing the facility each night.

In 2013 The Mission made the decision to no longer be open overnight during the winter season, except for during an ECWA, as they were unable to provide an appropriate place for persons to sleep. They continue to remain open as a warming centre during an ECWA. At a recent meeting they advised that approximately 2 to 4 persons now remain at the Mission all night during an ECWA.

### **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 is currently administered by the Homelessness Network in cooperation with the Elgin Street Mission and l'Association des jeunes de la rue. The Program runs from November 1st to March 31st each year.

The Extreme Cold Weather Alert program is a short-term emergency response which alerts shelters and social service agencies to increase drop-in centre hours and outreach services 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.

The Elgin Street Mission monitors the Environment Canada website daily and calls an Extreme Cold Weather Alert when one of the following triggers is reported:

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

The Extreme Cold Weather Alert is typically called around 11:00 am and remains in effect for a 24 hour period.

When an Extreme Cold Weather Alert is called:

- The Elgin Street Mission issues a news release advising the public of the alert, indicating the services that are available and encouraging people on the street to voluntarily access shelters and services. They will also advise the police, social services and community agencies that an ECWA has been issued.
- The Elgin Street Mission acts as a 24 hour warming station and serves hot coffee and food.
- L'Association des jeunes de la rue (Community Outreach Program) provides overnight outreach services to make contact with people on the street and transports individuals who voluntarily wish to access the warming station or shelters. Outreach workers provide those who choose not to access shelters with warm outerwear, blankets and coffee.
- L'Association des jeunes de la rue provides a contact number (705-675-6422) where people in need and concerned members of the public can call for information and assistance during an Extreme Cold Weather Alert.

The number of Extreme Cold Weather Alert days called vary widely depending on the winter season. The following Ontario communities have an Extreme Cold Weather Alert program: Brant, Halton, Middlesex-London, Niagara, Peel, Ottawa, Hamilton, Durham, Waterloo, Toronto and City of Greater Sudbury.

The following chart illustrates the number of days that have been called as an Extreme Cold Weather Alert over the past seven years in the City of Greater Sudbury. The trigger of “ a daily low of minus 20 degrees Celsius with a wind chill” was added in November 2012.

|                 | 2013      | 2012      | 2011      | 2010      | 2009      | 2008      | 2007      |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>January</b>  | 20        | 12        | 17        | 12        | 24        | 10        | 15        |
| <b>February</b> | 12        | 8         | 13        | 10        | 15        | 15        | 23        |
| <b>March</b>    | 5         | 4         | 15        | 1         | 9         | 9         | 7         |
| <b>November</b> | 4         | 2         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 2         |
| <b>December</b> | 17        | 10        | 6         | 6         | 9         | 19        | 8         |
|                 |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Totals</b>   | <b>58</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>52</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>57</b> | <b>54</b> | <b>55</b> |

Extreme Cold Weather Alerts are communicated to the public through media releases to local media outlets, and email and fax communications to a wide list of community agencies and service providers. Information is also communicated to service users by staff from the Samaritan Centre and Community Outreach Program.

## Next Steps

### Out of the Cold Shelter Beds

A meeting was held with the Salvation Army management to discuss the option of adding "out of the cold" shelter beds. City of Greater Sudbury staff will continue to explore this opportunity to meet the gap within existing services. The Salvation Army currently provides Emergency Shelter service for homeless men at 146 Larch Street, and for homeless women and families at 261 Cedar Street in Sudbury. The recent closure of an addiction treatment program at the 146 Larch Street location has resulted in some unused space within the existing building that may allow for the addition of out of the cold shelter beds.

Additional interest has been expressed by another organization but this would require setting up an additional site with additional overhead costs.

### Extreme Cold Weather Alert Outreach Services

The outreach services provided by l'Association des jeunes de la rue have been expanded and now operate from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am (previously 11:00 pm to 7:00 am) to allow for greater access to shelters and the warming centre.

### Extreme Cold Weather Alert Communication

Extreme Cold Weather Alerts have now been added to the City of Greater Sudbury Facebook page. As well, access to information and outreach services will now be available through 311.

The option of installing a light to inform the public of an ECWA is being explored by staff.

