

Request for Decision

Extreme Cold Weather Program

Presented To:	Community Services Committee
Presented:	Monday, Sep 17, 2012
Report Date	Wednesday, Sep 05, 2012
Type:	Managers' Reports

Recommendation

WHEREAS the City of Greater Sudbury will continue to provide the Extreme Cold Weather Alert Program; and

WHEREAS the change to the criteria is intended to provide an additional level of protection to those who are most vulnerable to the effects of cold weather, including the homeless;

THEREFORE let it be resolved that the Extreme Cold Weather Alert Program be enhanced to include a daily low of minus 15 degrees Celsius plus additional eligibility of minus 20 degrees Celsius with a wind chill.

Finance Implications

The increase in the program costs will be absorbed within the current operating budget.

Background

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:

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Gail Spencer
Coordinator of Shelters and Homelessness
Digitally Signed Sep 5, 12

Division Review

Luisa Valle
Director of Social Services
Digitally Signed Sep 5, 12

Recommended by the Department

Catherine Matheson
General Manager of Community Development
Digitally Signed Sep 5, 12

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Doug Nadorozny
Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Sep 5, 12

- a daily low of minus 15 degrees Celsius without 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 service and community agencies that an ECWA has been issued.
- The Elgin Street Mission acts as a 24 hour warming station and serve 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. Approximately 300 people have accessed the warming station and outreach services per night.

Program Enhancement

Recently, service providers within the City of Greater Sudbury have expressed a concern that the criteria for calling an Extreme Cold Weather Alert (ECWA) does not include an adequate trigger for a wind chill, and that some days which do not meet the current ECWA triggers have a wind chill that puts vulnerable people on the street at risk. The Division was asked to review the possibility of enhancing the current program by including a wind chill factor in the criteria.

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. Currently, ten of the communities have the same criteria as the City of Greater Sudbury. In 2006, Hamilton enhanced their program by incorporating a change in the trigger of temperature to include calling an alert when the weather conditions were at or below minus 15 degrees Celsius or minus 20 degrees Celsius with wind chill.

The following chart illustrates the number of days that have been called as an Extreme Cold Weather Alert over the past five years. The 2010 year was a very mild winter and therefore, the number of days that qualified was lower than the norm. Based on the following statistics, 55 days is the average for the program based on the current criteria of minus 15 degrees Celsius without a wind chill.

Actual Extreme Cold Weather Alert Days

	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
January	17	12	24	10	15
February	13	10	15	15	23
March	15	1	9	9	7
November	1	0	0	1	2
December	6	6	9	19	8
Totals	52	29	57	54	55

Using the 2011 actual temperatures, we completed an analysis to illustrate the effects of changing the temperature criteria and determining how many days would have been called an Extreme Cold Weather Alert. The first column represents the actual number of days for 2011 based on our current program. The next four columns incorporate a wind chill factor. The last column within this chart is based on the same criteria that has been adopted by Hamilton since 2006.

2011 Extreme Cold Weather Alert Days - Analysis

	Actual (-15 w/o Wind Chill)	-15 with Wind Chill	-16 with Wind Chill	-17 with Wind Chill	-18 with Wind Chill	-15 and/or -20 with Wind Chill
January	17	31	28	28	27	25
February	13	25	23	23	22	16
March	15	22	18	16	15	15
November	1	1	1	1	0	1
December	6	20	19	18	16	10
Totals	52	99	89	86	80	67

Based on the above, it is forecasted that the program enhancement of including a minus 20 degrees Celsius with wind chill would result in about 30% increase in the number of days within the Extreme Cold Weather Alert and approximately \$15,000 increase in the program costs if the weather temperatures continue on a consistent basis as in prior years. If the recommendation is to enhance the existing program, the Division will be able to absorb the differential within the existing operating budget, therefore ensuring there is no increase to the budget.

This program is funded through a cost sharing formula between the Province and the Municipality. For 2013 the cost sharing formula is 85.8% Provincial and 14.2% Municipal and by the year 2018 will be funded 100% by the Province as the costs are being uploaded.

The change to the criteria is intended to provide an additional level of protection to those who are most vulnerable to the effects of cold weather, including the homeless.