

Recommendations Report of the Men's Homelessness Committee Presented to Council January 24, 2022

To quote the October 28, Dufferin County report titled Homelessness Concerns in Dufferin, "There is no one agency or one level of government who can solve this very complex issue".

In our Region:

The upper tier municipality of Dufferin County has been tasked with providing Social Services such as support for the Homeless. This support is provided through a few Service Providers who, after a comprehensive vetting process, have been contracted by Dufferin County. The Service Providers are funded by Dufferin County. Dufferin County does not provide the service directly. Organizations who are currently contracted by Dufferin County to provide support for the Homeless include Choices Youth Shelter, the Salvation Army, the Dufferin Area Family Health Team and Family Transition Place. Other organizations that have received one time funding from Dufferin County include Services and Housing in the Province, the Orangeville Food Bank, Community Living Dufferin and the Lighthouse. Funding flows through Dufferin County from the Provincial Government's "Community Homelessness Prevention Program" and the Federal Government's "Reaching Home" program.

Dufferin County created a Coordinated Access Table (CAT) to bring together the Service Providers and other agencies who are working on the Homelessness issue. Each week the "By-Name List" is reviewed. The By-Name List is a list of every person in Dufferin County who is experiencing Homelessness and includes their name, Homeless history, health and housing needs.

The Dufferin Men's Homeless Committee:

Previously an ad hoc committee of volunteers had commissioned the University of Guelph through The Research Shop to provide a Needs Assessment on homelessness in Dufferin County. When the Town of Orangeville Men's Homelessness Committee was created, the University of Guelph commission was transferred to this new committee of council.

Homelessness has many causal factors. In the attached report authored by The Research Shop, Service Providers were asked to rank what they thought were the main causes of Men's Homelessness in their community. The responses were ranked as follows:

- Unaffordable housing
- Mental health and addiction
- Inaccessible housing
- Lack of resources to support men's needs
- Exposure to trauma or adversity
- Unemployment or underemployment
- Social Exclusion

The final question of the Service Providers Survey asked what could be done to better serve Homeless Men? The suggestions included:

- Provide emergency shelter
- Provide supported transitional housing
- Provide a range of harm reduction services

- Anger management/life skills workshops
- Mental Health and Addiction Support
- Men's Drop in Center
- Permanent, affordable housing (including affordable rent or rent subsidies)
- Assistance with transportation
- Community medical support
- Outreach strategies for at risk individuals
- More funding for Service Providers who are addressing the issue of men's homelessness

Opportunities and Next Steps

Under the Opportunities and Next Steps segment of the University of Guelph Needs Assessment indicates the following recommendations:

Expanding the Reach of Current Homelessness Services:

"Overall, there is a lack of social services supporting men experiencing Homelessness" as stated within the Needs Assessment. FTP (Family Transition Place) and Choices provide a very good level of support for women, children and youth. There is no support agency specifically targeting men's issues.

Engaging More Effectively with Those with Lived Experience:

A suggestion to consult (with fair compensation) individuals with lived experiences of homelessness. The authors suggest involving current/past homeless men in the process of decision making

Considering the Unique Needs of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness:

Homeless individuals have unique needs that are shaped by their gender, identity, past experiences, mental health and experiences with trauma

Improving Awareness of Homelessness Services:

The report states that improving community awareness of services and supports for those experiencing homelessness should also be a targeted area moving forward – given the high rates of respondents who said that they would not know how to access service and who said that they were not aware of services

Create Affordable Housing:

Emergency housing and shelters are just a stop gap measure when the bigger issue that needs to be addressed is housing affordability.

Recommendations of the Men's Homelessness Committee to Orangeville Town Council

Crisis Beds:

After consultation with Anna McGregor, Director, Community Services and Lesley Nagoda, Chief Executive Officer, Services and Housing in the Province (S.H.I.P.), there is an identified need for Crisis Care Beds within Dufferin County. Crisis Stabilization Beds support individuals coping with a mental health crisis or other issues and offer support to help the individual

manage their particular crisis in a residential setting which includes an individual room for each attendee. Currently, the closest Crisis Beds available to Dufferin County are in Brampton, Ontario.

The operation of Crisis Bed Facilities is funded by the Ontario Health Teams. It is incumbent that the Town Council, Dufferin County Council and all other regional stakeholders support the creation of a Crisis Bed Facility in Orangeville serving the surrounding Region. We need to reach out to our Provincial Member of Parliament, Sylvia Jones, for support in securing funding for this facility from our Ontario Health Team at Headwaters.

Therefore, the committee recommends that Council submit a letter of endorsement and support to Ontario Health advocating for funding towards crisis beds in Dufferin County and request that all Dufferin County lower-tier municipalities be encouraged to submit endorsement letters of same.

The committee would like to further suggest and request that the Town direct staff to investigate the possibility of retro-fitting the Fire Station on Dawson Road into a Crisis Home in partnership with a service provider such as S.H.I.P. and for the Town Council to endorse the creation of a Community Capital Fundraising Campaign to assist with retrofit expenses including leasing and/or purchasing the building.

Supporting information in recommendation for Dufferin area crisis beds:

1. Supply

According to Connex Ontario's most current information, of nine crisis beds programs in Ontario the Brampton location is the first most under resourced (1:97,726). An expansion of the program would more adequately align the program with comparable populated urban areas like Toronto (1:60,987) and most recently the Mississauga location (1:55,294).

City	# of Beds	Population	Ratio (Bed to Popn)
Mississauga	14	774,116.00	1 to 55,294.00
Ottawa	11	1,043,130.00	1 to 94,830.00
Brampton	8	781,810.00	1 to 97,726.25
Toronto	49	2,988,408.00	1 to 60,987.92
Hamilton	13	581,722.00	1 to 44,747.85
London	19	430,828.00	1 to 22,675.16
Newmarket	4	90,021.00	1 to 22,505.25
St Catharines	11	141,490.00	1 to 12,862.73
Whitby	8	140,950.00	1 to 17,618.75

Notes

Brampton population includes Dufferin

Source information for Safe beds information from Connex Ontario

Source information for population: <http://www.citypopulation.de/Canada-Ontario.html> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Ontario

2. Demand

There is a growing community demand on the program. At present, the crisis beds program has a 4:1 demand ratio with 4 referrals to 1 available bed. The program refuses admission to clients based solely on bed availability. S.H.I.P. continues to track and

monitor in order to critically analyze the need for resources and this pattern has been consistent quarter to quarter. In Q1 of 2019/2020 (pre COVID): 453 turn-aways, averaging 150 turn-aways per month, this is an increase from 140 average per month.

3. Geography: Dufferin County

There is a need for an expansion of the program to Dufferin to better serve the clients who reside in the community. With population of approximately 60,000 citizens, Dufferin County is also seeing higher growth rates. Currently, clients from Dufferin must travel to the Brampton location to receive the much-needed services of a crisis home.

Transportation issues are a barrier to access and is a displacement from their home community. A location in Dufferin County of approximately 8 beds with attached staffing resources would enable the program to more appropriately serve the entire community and support a health equity approach.

Warming Centres:

During the cold winter months and due to the lack of emergency shelters, warming centres are an interim solution for those in need. The committee reviewed many other municipalities that are offering a warming centre program such as Barrie, Orillia and Toronto and recommends the Town to implement a warming centre either at a municipal facility or in collaboration with our community churches for when temperatures fall below -6°C. As operated in many other municipalities, security and assistance from service providers such as the John Howard Society are recommended and the committee requests that the necessary funding requirements for the warming centre program be presented to council for consideration.

Enhanced Motel Voucher Program:

That, in the interim the Town of Orangeville request the County of Dufferin to enhance its existing motel voucher program by 1) encouraging all motels to participate, 2) offering motel vouchers to all agencies, community organizations and faith groups which may wish to participate, 3) ensuring that there are no unnecessary qualification and/or time restrictions placed on accessibility to motel vouchers for homelessness men in need, 4) establish a 24/7 emergency hotline for the motel voucher program as an initiative of the County of Dufferin or in partnership with the OPP (Ontario Provincial Police) detachment in Orangeville, and 5) to make the public as well as community organizations aware of the existence of the motel voucher program through regular website and social media posts, newspaper ads and articles, as well as posters in the downtown area in conjunction with the BIA.

Mental Health Resources:

That the Town of Orangeville in partnership with Dufferin County pressure the Provincial Government to provide adequate mental health treatment resources to our region. And further that the Province recognizes that adequate mental health treatment resources will help address and reduce issues of homelessness, domestic violence, addiction and crime. Money spent on mental health treatments will be of great societal benefit.

Men's Issues Resource Hub:

That the Town of Orangeville, in collaboration with Dufferin County to provide information that will assist men with gender specific issues. Development of an internet presence where resources can be found as well as establishing virtual or in person meetings where men can meet with a counsellor or advisor knowledgeable in men's issues. Local clergy have expressed interest in providing support and counselling.

Improved Communication:

Improving community awareness was identified in the University of Guelph Needs Assessment report and therefore the committee recommends that the Town of Orangeville continue, on a regular basis, through its communication channels, including website, Town newspaper pages and community services to promote and provide information to the community about resources for men's issues and men's homelessness.

Affordable Housing:

That the Town of Orangeville make changes to its Zoning Bylaws to make housing more affordable.

And that the Town of Orangeville encourage the Provincial Government to make changes to the Planning Act to increase the supply of residential housing units and those changes to include:

- Zoning changes such as Shared Ownership, and other progressive zoning changes, be considered – the “Golden Girls” model where multiple people could hold an interest in communally owned real estate
- That the Town makes use of Town owned land to create Affordable Housing using Federal and Provincial programs for funding construction
- The Town supports other Social Service providers who pursue building Affordable Housing units
- The Town sends a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in support of reduction of “red tape” with respect to urban development, in other words, accelerate the approval process so that new housing inventory levels can meet demand
- The Town adds Inclusionary Zoning to new developments – where developers are required to provide a percentage of low to moderate cost housing in new developments

Many thanks to the following Men's Homelessness Committee Members who provided valuable insight and contributed during the term of the committee.

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