

September 17, 2019

To: Members
Mayor's Housing Commission

Re: Plan to End Homelessness in Regina - Plan Release

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be received and filed.

CONCLUSION

On June 20, 2019 a five-year Plan to End Homelessness for Regina (Plan) was released. The Plan is provided as Appendix A of this report. The goal of the Plan is to end chronic and episodic homelessness in Regina, and to ensure any future episodes of homelessness are rare, brief and non-recurring. Community stakeholders collaborated in development of the plan and identified the following objectives for Regina in implementing the Plan:

- Everyone has access to service when they need it.
- People's experience of homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.
- Services are coordinated.

This report provides background on the Plan and its key content. The YMCA will also be present at the September 17 Mayor's Housing Committee (MHC) meeting to provide an overview of the Plan.

Administration has begun an analysis of the Plan and implications for the City. A report will be brought forward to MHC in the coming months.

BACKGROUND

Federal Funding for Homelessness in Regina

The Regina community receives federal funding as part of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). In 2012, the YMCA was contracted as the Community Entity for the HPS to oversee the assignment of federal funds and program delivery to address homelessness in Regina. The YMCA is also responsible for measuring the progress of funded projects and reporting the results to the federal government. The work of the YMCA is governed by the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board (RHCAB), which is made up of public, private and non-profit sector individuals.

The HPS has funded significant accomplishments for Regina since 2014. These include an enumeration of homeless individuals to understand the scale and context of homelessness in Regina using Point-In-Time (PIT) counts completed in 2015 and 2018, as well as the creation, implementation and evaluation of Regina's first Housing First Program.

In June 2018 the federal government announced the launch of a redesigned homelessness strategy called Reaching Home, to replace HPS. This announcement included a commitment to doubling the federal investment in addressing homelessness by 2021-22. Reaching Home aligns with the federal government’s commitment under the National Housing Strategy. Reaching Home will launch on April 1, 2020.

Housing First

Housing First began in Regina in 2015 with a community consultation and research into best practices. The Housing First Program for Regina was launched in 2016 with initial results of the program collected in 2017 and 2018. Results for the first two years of the Housing First Program have shown promising outcomes, including a significant reduction in calls for service and interactions with law enforcement, as well as cost savings due to lower rates of hospitalization, emergency response and arrests. The following statistics represent the impacts of clients served by Housing First (Table 1). Due to a significant reduction in interactions with police, hospital and detox services, the Housing First Program is estimated to have saved approximately \$18,000 per person per year over the first two years of implementation.

Table 1 – Reduction in services among Housing First clients

Public System Interaction in Regina’s Housing First program (n=49)	
Police Calls Reduction	81%
Arrests Reduction	89%
Days in Hospital Reduction	40%
ER Visits Reduction	75%
EMS Reduction	66%
Detox Visits Reduction	93%

On June 25, 2018, City Council considered Report CR18-67, providing an overview of the ways in which the City currently supports Regina’s homeless population, including the Community Investments Grants Program and Housing Incentives Policy. City Council passed the motion:

“That the City of Regina continue providing in-kind and financial support towards confronting homelessness as discussed in this report”.

Currently, the City commits up to \$2.5 million in annual capital funding towards the development of rental and ownership affordable housing, as well as staff to administer the City’s Housing Incentives Policy. Since 2013 the City of Regina has also approved tax exemptions for 408 new affordable rental units. The City’s Community Investment Grants Program funds community organizations to deliver programs and projects that respond to community needs, including homelessness. A member of Administration also sits on the RHCAB.

Plan to End Homelessness

The Plan differs from previous initiatives as it is created by and for the community. It also identifies resources from all three levels of the government that would be needed to implement

the Plan. In recent years, several other prairie cities have developed similar plans to end homelessness for their community, including Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton and Medicine Hat.

Work began in 2017 with a Call for Proposals to select a consultant to lead in the creation of a Plan. The YMCA and the RHCAB advanced the creation of the Plan by committing \$60,000 in federal HPS funding to hire a consultant. On September 25, 2017, City Council adopted CM17-12 to commit the additional \$60,000 in funds needed to create the Plan.

Through a competitive request for proposals, the RHCAB selected the consultant team of Turner Strategies, The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and A Way Home Canada (Consultant), to prepare the Plan.

On Friday, February 16, 2018, the YMCA, along with the RHCAB and their partners, hosted a press conference to kick off the creation process for the Plan. To guide the development of the Plan, a Community Leadership Committee was formed of leaders from government, non-profit and private-sector organizations. The Plan was completed in the spring of 2019 and publicly released on June 20, 2019.

DISCUSSION

The Plan is based on extensive research to assess the extent of homelessness in Regina using local data and program information, as well as the social and economic factors impacting homelessness in Regina. Background research was supplemented with extensive community engagement, including community events, workshops, surveys, focus groups and stakeholder interviews. The Plan was created with a person-centered approach to ensure that individuals with lived experience were consulted and had a meaningful role. Other core concepts in the creation of the Plan are the importance of community engagement and the recognition that the effort towards ending homelessness is an act of Reconciliation with the Indigenous community.

Community Engagement for the Plan

While developing the Plan, the Consultant had over 470 points of contact with local residents, researchers and those with lived experience of homelessness through the following events:

- A community summit on homelessness on March 21, 2018.
- In total, 20 design lab workshops with subject matter experts and community members to identify solutions and actions.
- Focus groups with individuals who had lived experience with homelessness.
- A public survey resulting in 72 online responses.
- Stakeholder interviews with service providers and members of the Community Leadership Committee.

Foundation: Housing First

The Plan builds on the success of Regina's Housing First Program. Housing First is based on the principle that the first and primary need of a homeless individual is to obtain stable, permanent housing. Once stable housing is obtained, other issues such as addictions or mental health can be appropriately addressed.

The Plan recommends an expansion of Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing for Regina so that more of Regina's homeless individuals can be successfully housed through this approach. The current Housing First Program must prioritize clients with high needs or acuity as measured through an extensive intake evaluation. Due to financial constraints and limited space in the current system, individuals and families with less complex issues are not able to access Housing First, thus posing a risk that such households will spend more time in homelessness before receiving assistance. Research has shown that this risk increases the potential for long-term and chronic homelessness.

Similarly, the lack of permanent supportive housing in Regina has limited the ability of individuals in the Housing First Program to move into independent living in order to free up space for additional individuals to enter the Housing First Program. Permanent supportive housing is defined in the Plan as housing "with individualized and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse".

Functional Zero for Homelessness in Regina

The objective of the Plan is to end chronic and episodic homelessness in Regina using a definition of functional zero to achieve this goal. As defined in the Plan, functional zero refers to the state of a community in which anyone who experiences homelessness "does so only briefly, is rehoused successfully and therefore [is] unlikely to return to homelessness."

Plan Content and Measurable Outcomes

The Plan is broken down into the following four pillars. Each of the four pillars has key, measurable outcomes. A description of each pillar and key measurable outcomes is included in *Plan Pillars and Key Outcomes* beginning on page 38 of the Plan:

1. Leadership and Implementation:
 - Funding secured for Coordinator Position for Plan implementation.
 - Governance body for Plan established and Plan implementation positions hired.
2. Data-driven Systems Integration & Coordinated Access:
 - Community-wide systems mapping with service providers to understand existing services, program capacities and needs.
 - Integration of a single, real-time data platform for homeless-serving sector.
 - Comprehensive Coordinated Access model for individuals to access a continuum of services.
3. Housing and Supports:
 - Additional people housed through:
 - 80 new permanent supportive housing spaces.
 - 80 new affordable housing spaces.
 - 80 new rent supports.
 - 100 prevention interventions.
 - Additional people supported through:
 - 140 assertive community treatment spaces.
 - 130 intensive case management spaces.

- Align housing models across the sector with best practices for supporting people who experience interpersonal violence.
4. Capacity Building and Public Awareness:
- Increased training for service providers in priority areas, such as cultural competency, trauma-informed care and recovery-oriented approaches.
 - Population-specific lens applied to program design, implementation and outcome evaluations.
 - Renew the ‘Regina Street Survival Guide’ and other resources to ensure those at risk of or experiencing homelessness know where to go to quickly find the right help.
 - Host an annual Community Forum on the Plan.

Plan Targets and Areas of Investment

The Plan calls for a significant expansion of the Housing First Program. In doing so, the Plan directs the community to better coordinate, align and increase financial and human resources to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending. The Plan also recognizes the need for flexibility within programs to allow for a system that can respond to the unique and specific needs of individuals.

The measures established in the Plan aim to support approximately 2,200 people through existing, and new, programs and housing. This number is based on PIT counts completed for Regina, as well as estimates of individuals who are the hidden homeless, meaning those individuals and households that are living in transient or precarious situations, or those who may not wish to be identified as homeless or who are not accessing services to remain housed.

The Plan includes several cost scenarios alongside target benchmarks to address homelessness, such as length of time individuals spend in homelessness, the level of housing support once a person exits homelessness and the rates of homelessness relapse once individuals have been housed.

A summary of the areas of investment proposed by the Plan and estimated costs are included below in Table 2. The Plan recognizes that the financial estimates noted below include existing investments in social housing and ongoing work including the Housing First Program and do not represent entirely new funding needs but rather an increase in funding or expansion of existing programs and projects.

Table 2 - Areas of Investment

Assertive Community Treatment and Intensive Case Management

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) is defined in the Plan as “a client-centered, recovery-oriented mental health service delivery model that has received substantial empirical support for facilitating community living, psychosocial rehabilitation, and recovery for persons who have the most serious mental illnesses, have severe symptoms and impairments, and have not benefited from traditional outpatient programs.” Based on an assessment of existing services and immediate needs, there is an estimated demand for an additional 270 program spaces for high acuity, complex clients experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness. The Plan identifies that \$5.4 million committed per year would provide:

- 140 program spaces for Assertive Community Treatment at \$2.9 million per year at \$21,000 per space.
- 130 program spaces for Intensive Case Management at \$2.5 million per year at \$19,000 per space.

Permanent Supportive Housing

The Plan identifies \$15 million in capital funding required to create new supportive housing for complex and chronically homeless individuals. Supportive housing development has the potential to receive federal funding under the Co-Investment Fund of the National Housing Strategy in partnership with Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, municipal housing incentives, private or non-profit investments, as well as in-kind contributions such as land. An additional \$9.8 million is estimated as needed for operational support for supportive housing.

Support Programs

Support for clients being rehoused will be sought from federal and provincial sources, including federal funds under Reaching Home, Saskatchewan Ministry of Health, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Ministry of Justice, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and Ministry of Social Services, as well as financial support from The National Housing Benefit.

Housing Affordability and Homelessness Prevention

Investment from the National Housing Strategy in partnership with Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Social Services should help advance the creation of an estimated 80 new affordable housing spaces, 80 permanent supportive housing units, 80 rent supports and 100 prevention spaces. Through these new investments and existing supports, Regina would support an additional 670 individuals who are transitionally homeless or at risk of homelessness or those graduating from the Housing First Program in order to avoid the recurrence of homelessness. New housing and supports are estimated to cost \$10 million in capital and \$2.9 million in prevention and rental support.

Next Steps

Implementation of the Plan will require funding, staffing and a governance structure. Governance for the implementation of the Plan will be discussed and decided upon by the RHCAB with input from the Community Leadership Committee, once the local delivery structure for homelessness support has been adapted to respond to the federal government's Reaching Home strategy. Administration will return to MHC in the coming months with a report that outlines the implications to the City on the recommendations of the Plan.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Administration will identify any financial implications to endorsing the City with the recommendations in the Plan, through a subsequent report.

Environmental Implications

None with respect to this report.

Policy and/or Strategic Implications

Design Regina: The Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2013-48 includes policies and direction related to the support of Regina’s vulnerable and marginalized populations, including policy 13.14 to “work with others to ensure that all residents have secure access to basic needs, such as food, housing and other services” and policy 13.15 to “participate in the development of a comprehensive plan to address homelessness in partnership with other levels of government”.

The Comprehensive Housing Strategy includes several strategies for supporting Regina’s homeless population, including:

- Strategy 27 “continue to support housing and homelessness initiatives through the Community Investment Grants Program and identify ways to allocate funding for maximum community impact”.
- Strategy 28 “continue to play a lead role in the federal government’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy by preparing the Community Plan to Address Homelessness”.
- Strategy 35 “play a lead facilitation role in establishing and coordinating a housing and homelessness coalition of community stakeholders as a way of coordinating collaboration, engaging stakeholders and obtaining advice”.

Other Implications

Truth and Reconciliation

A core tenant of the Plan is recognizing that addressing homelessness is an act of reconciliation as Indigenous individuals make up a large percentage of those experiencing homelessness.

The Plan aims to remove barriers for participation by Indigenous peoples and to apply a cultural lens to support Indigenous individuals who are experiencing homelessness, including traditional ceremonies, staff training, housing design and work with Elders. The Plan also acknowledges the need for continued Indigenous leadership throughout implementation of the Plan.

Accessibility Implications

Implementation of the Plan will consider housing that is accessible to a broad range of individuals.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Plan has been distributed to key stakeholders and the community at large through the YMCA and is available online at **endhomelessnessregina.ca**.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

There is no delegated authority associated with this report and it is for information purposes only.

Respectfully Submitted,

Respectfully Submitted,



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9/10/2019



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9/10/2019

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