

January 30, 2017

To: His Worship the Mayor
And Members of City Council

Re: Homelessness Partnering Strategy - Update

RECOMMENDATION

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE MAYORS HOUSING COMMISSION TO COUNCIL -
DECEMBER 1, 2016**

That this report be received and filed.

MAYORS HOUSING COMMISSION - DECEMBER 1, 2016

The Committee adopted a resolution to concur in the recommendation contained in the report.

Mayor Michael Fougere (Chairperson), Councillors: Lori Bresciani, Councillor Bob Hawkins, Councillor Andrew Stevens, Robert Byers, Patrick Cooper, Blair Forster, Patrick Mah, Malcom Neill were present during consideration of this report by the Mayors Housing Commission.

The Mayors Housing Commission, at its meeting held on December 1, 2016 considered the following report from the Administration:

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be forwarded to the December 19, 2016 meeting of City Council for information purposes only.

CONCLUSION

Through the federal government Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), the Regina community is receiving funding in each of five years to address homelessness under the strategic direction of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) and administration of the Community Entity (YMCA). The CAB is made up of representatives of the public and non-profit sectors, including the City of Regina (City). The City's role in supporting the federal government's program to address homelessness in Regina is consistent with the recommendations in the *Comprehensive Housing Strategy* and the *Design Regina: The Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2013-48*.

The Administration has been providing the Mayor's Housing Commission (MHC) with regular updates on the activities of the HPS through reports, memos and briefing notes. As well, members of the Commission have been participating in HPS community consultations and public

events. Since the last update there has been considerable progress.

HPS is in its third year of the five-year program. Over the first two years (April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2016) HPS experienced a number of successes, including some “firsts” for the Regina community, such as the Point-in-Time Count (PIT Count) and the community-wide training to deliver Housing First. This report summarizes the key initiatives over the initial two-year funding cycle (April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2016) and presents some steps for moving forward in the current year and over the short term.

BACKGROUND

While many of the federal government’s former responsibilities in housing were turned over to provincial governments, the federal government has maintained its role in homelessness. The HPS is the responsibility of Employment and Social Development Canada and is the cornerstone of the federal government’s commitment to address homelessness.

The HPS is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness. The program provides funds to 61 designated communities across Canada, including the Regina community, to address homelessness. The federal government committed to five years of funding, April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2019. The Regina community receives approximately \$1.1 million in each of the five years, which is administered through the YMCA. As well, as part the 2016 federal budget support for social infrastructure, the Regina community is receiving an additional \$930,000 in each of the fiscal years 2016 and 2017 for a total of over \$2 million in each of the two years.

To receive federal funds, a Community Plan on Homelessness must be developed under the direction of a CAB. The Community Plan works within the strategic priorities established by the federal government and identifies the community’s needs and priorities based on leading practices, local research and community consultations. The federal government approves the plan. Funds are then allocated by the CAB through various call for proposals which align with the plan.

DISCUSSION

All HPS funds over the initial two-year funding cycle (2014 to 2016) have been spent. The following are the allocation highlights:

- Provided funds (\$1.8M) to non-profit organizations to deliver support services, improve service coordination and increase the capacity of facilities used by those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness (see Appendix A);
- Completed a Point-in-Time Count on Homelessness;
- Produced the video titled *In Plain View*;
- Developed a model and implementation plan for a Housing First strategy; and
- Launched Regina’s Housing First strategy.

A description of funding allocation and other HPS successes are detailed below.

Funds to Non-Profit Organizations

A key priority of Regina's Community Plan on Homelessness is ensuring that individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness have access to community-based programs, services and facilities. Consequently, the majority of HPS funds were allocated to non-profit organizations.

The Community Plan identifies three priorities for funding allocations to non-profits:

1. **Support Services** - For the HPS, a support service is defined as any individualized service to improve the self-sufficiency of homeless individuals and families and those at imminent risk of homelessness. Activities include:
 - Housing placement;
 - Connecting clients to income supports;
 - Pre-employment support and bridging to the labour market;
 - Life skills development;
 - Supports to improve social integration;
 - Culturally relevant responses to help Indigenous clients;
 - Connecting clients to education and supporting success; and
 - Basic or urgent needs services.

2. **Capital Investments** - For the HPS, capital investment projects are intended to increase the quantity or improve the quality of facilities that address the needs of people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Activities include:
 - Construction, renovation and purchase of transitional housing facilities, permanent supportive housing and non-residential facilities (e.g. drop-in centres and multi-service centres);
 - Purchase of furniture, equipment and vehicles; and
 - Renovation of emergency shelters.

3. **Coordination of Resources and Leveraging** - For the HPS, coordination of resources and leveraging is defined as a model in support of a broader systemic approach to addressing homelessness. Activities include:
 - Determining a model in support of a broader systemic approach to addressing homelessness;
 - Identifying, integrating and improving services through measures such as training;
 - Partnership development;
 - Working with the housing sector to identify opportunities for and barriers to permanent housing (e.g. establishing landlord relationships, mapping of current available assets); and

- Community consultation, coordination, planning and assessment.

The following are some examples of projects funded:

- Completed major structural and electrical renovations to a supportive housing facility for youth;
- Installed new heating and cooling in an emergency shelter for women;
- Purchased a vehicle and provided 15 move-in kits, including furniture and other household items, to support youth moving into safe, stable housing;
- Hired an outreach coordinator to support women who are involved in the drug treatment court program and transitioning from supportive housing to live independently; and
- Assisted some of Regina's most vulnerable residents, many with mental health and addictions issues, by locating housing and developing individualized care plans.

Appendix A provides information on all funded projects over the initial two years.

Point-in-Time Count on Homelessness

The community's first-ever PIT Count was completed in May, 2015. Approximately 150 volunteers and 34 community partners came together under the leadership of the YMCA to enumerate and survey Regina's homeless community. A PIT Count is a research tool used to gather a snapshot of homelessness over a 24-hour period. It has two components:

- An enumeration, which counts the number of homeless individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, on-street and in public systems such as detoxification centres; and
- A survey to gather key demographic information and the self-reported needs of those experiencing homelessness.

232 were enumerated on the night of the count. From the enumeration and survey, the following demographics emerged:

- 73 were youth aged 0 to 24 years;
- 63 were children and youth under 18 years old;
- 30 were experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness;
- 21 first experienced homelessness as children;
- 8 were sleeping outdoors; and
- 75 per cent were Indigenous.

The Regina community will use the results to:

- Increase understanding of the characteristics of the homelessness in Regina;
- Provide baseline data to measure progress on ending homelessness over time;
- Improve system planning and program development; and
- Help mobilize the community around homelessness issues.

It is important to note that a PIT Count has several limitations. A PIT Count is only a snapshot of the sheltered and unsheltered population on a single night. A PIT Count does not attempt to capture the hidden homeless or those at risk of homelessness. As well, despite best efforts to develop rigorous methods and to canvass areas frequented by those experiencing homelessness, PIT Counts inherently undercount the number of homeless.

The PIT Count was part of a broader effort by the federal government to develop a harmonized approach to homeless counts nationally. Regina was among the first jurisdictions to use the standardized methodology, leading the way in Canada. The PIT Count will be repeated in fiscal year 2017/2018 and following that every two years. Future counts will follow a similar process to ensure comparability with the 2015 count and national standards.

The 2015 count has put Regina in a good position to undertake future counts. It identified many volunteers to engage in future counts, built capacity in the YMCA to manage all aspects of counts, created a methodology for future counts and identified measures to improve the next count.

In Plain View Video

Homelessness is a community issue and requires a coordinated community response. The video *In Plain View* was produced during the 2015 PIT Count and is being used as a tool to engage and mobilize the community (including the general public) around homelessness issues. Students and faith-based organizations have been particularly responsive in showing support for the homeless and the issue of homelessness.

Regina's Housing First Model and Implementation Plan

In 2014, the federal government renewed the HPS for five years with the expectation that communities would reduce the size of their homeless population. As a stipulation to receiving federal funds, the Regina community was required to invest a minimum of 40 per cent of the annual funds in Housing First activities by March 31, 2016. Housing First was identified as the vehicle to make the shift from simply managing homelessness by placing homeless individuals in temporary shelters to reducing homelessness by placing them in permanent housing.

Housing First is both a philosophy and program. Housing First is based on the assumption that the first and primary need of a person experiencing homelessness is to obtain stable, permanent housing. Once in housing other enduring issues such as addictions or mental health can be addressed. As an intervention, Housing First involves moving individuals who are chronically and episodically homeless from the streets or emergency shelters directly into housing and providing support services to maintain the housing and work toward stability and self-

sufficiency. This is in sharp contrast to the traditional approach which requires individuals to demonstrate readiness for each step in the housing continuum (e.g. emergency shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing) as they work toward permanent housing.

While there are core principles and elements to Housing First, there is not a single program model that applies to every situation. To prepare for the shift to Housing First in Regina and to build a strong foundation to deliver the program over the long-term, 2015 funds were used to develop a Regina Housing First Model and Implementation Plan. McNair Business Development was contracted to lead the project and to facilitate the development of the model and implementation plan report based on extensive community education and consultations.

In January 2016, the Housing First model and implementation plan was presented at a public event well attended by the media and non-profit and public sectors. The report has been well received by the community and accomplishes a number of important objectives in moving forward on Housing First in Regina, including:

- Incorporating leading practices into Regina's model;
- Considering information from key Regina documents, including the PIT Count and the public Charrette on homelessness;
- Building a common understanding of the benefits and requirements of a Housing First model for Regina;
- Considering and incorporating into the model key elements that already exist in the community; and
- Providing recommendations that are actionable, practicable and effective in reducing homelessness.

Launch of the Housing First Program

A call for proposals was issued in early January 2016 to deliver a Housing First pilot project from April 2016 to March 2017 based on Regina's Housing First Model report. Phoenix Residential Society was selected as the successful proponent and awarded over \$400,000. Phoenix has extensive experience delivering Housing First and working with individuals experiencing homelessness and living with mental health disabilities.

As a starting point in launching Housing First and providing leadership and coordination to the many community organizations essential to delivering Housing First, Phoenix Residential Society in partnership with the YMCA provided three-day front-line training to 57 service providers representing 22 organizations. The training included VI-SPDAT/SPDAT (Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Pre-screen Tool). These are assessment tools which help measure the level of support intervention needed, guiding housing placement. Individuals with high scores are now being placed in the Housing First program. Those with lower scores are being referred to one of the organizations delivering a Rapid Rehousing Program funded by HPS in 2016/2017. In October 2016, 18 individuals were participating in the Housing First Program at Phoenix.

Moving Forward

Key plans for moving forward over the short-term include the following.

- Housing First efforts will focus on housing those least likely to find housing through existing services and programs. These individuals are often the chronically and episodically homeless and typically heavy users of social services such as police cells, emergency services and hospitals. Once these individuals are housed other homeless populations will be targeted for Housing First.
- Rapid Rehousing - Similar to Housing First, Rapid Rehousing is being used to help individuals who are homeless move quickly into housing. It supports both individuals and families experiencing transitional and episodic homelessness and with moderate service needs. These clients are typically placed in permanent, market housing scattered across the community. Carmichael Outreach, Street Culture Project Y Shore and the YWCA have been funded by HPS in the 2016/2017 fiscal year to deliver Rapid Rehousing for various target populations.
- An evaluator will be brought into the process in the 2016/2017 fiscal year to evaluate the Housing First and Rapid Rehousing efforts to ensure progress.
- An organization is being contracted to support the intensive case management work at Phoenix Residential Society and to integrate additional Indigenous cultural components into the casework.
- Housing First will be implemented as a pilot in 2016 using only HPS funds. The plan is to grow the program in the future by attracting other funders who see the benefits of Housing First and community partners. The PIT Count identified the service organizations involved with the homeless population over the previous 12 months demonstrating opportunities for partnerships. The evaluation results will be shared.
- The Regina community will organize a PIT Count during the 2017/2018 fiscal year and will follow a similar process to the 2015 count to ensure comparability.
- The public and the media will continue to be advised of HPS activities through community engagement sessions organized by the YMCA.
- Administration will continue to update the MHC on the activities of the HPS.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

There are no financial requests of the City related to this report. The work on homelessness is

being funded through the federal government HPS. The funds are housed at the YMCA and allocated based on the recommendations of the Community Advisory Board.

Environmental Implications

None for this report.

Policy and/or Strategic Implications

The City's role does not include being the primary level of government for the overall issue of housing and homelessness; however, the City will continue to support and complement the policies and programs of the provincial and federal governments.

This role is aligned with *Design Regina: The Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2013-48*, which states that the City *participate in the development of a comprehensive plan to address homelessness in partnership with other levels of government* (Policy 13.15).

It is also consistent with Strategy 28 of the *Comprehensive Housing Strategy*, which recommends that the City play a lead role in the federal government's HPS by working on the Community Plan on Homelessness.

Other Implications

None for this report.

Accessibility Implications

It is expected that those experiencing homelessness will have increased access to appropriate, stable and safe housing through Housing First and Rapid Rehousing.

COMMUNICATIONS

Administration will continue to provide updates on the activities of the HPS as the work progresses. The YMCA is the media spokesperson for the HPS.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

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

Respectfully submitted,

MAYOR'S HOUSING COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hall".

Erna Hall, Secretary