

Region of Waterloo
Community Services
Housing Services

To: Regional Council

Meeting Date: May 24, 2023

Report Title: Update on the Three High Risk Encampments in Waterloo Region

1. Recommendation

For Information.

2. Purpose / Issue:

This report provides an update on the Region of Waterloo's efforts to support individuals to voluntarily transition from the three high-risk encampments to shelter spaces, including the interim outdoor shelter at Erb's Road, or other forms of transitional or permanent housing

3. Strategic Plan:

Integral to fostering healthy, safe, and inclusive communities is ending homelessness in all of its forms. Efforts to ensure a safe place to call home for everyone in Waterloo Region align with the Region of Waterloo 2019-2023 Corporate Strategic Plan, Focus Area 4: Healthy, Safe, and Inclusive Communities. The report specifically addresses Strategic Objective 4.5, 'enhance community safety and wellbeing in Waterloo Region'.

4. Report Highlights:

- For the purposes of this report, staff obtained updated by-name lists of those residing at one of the three high-risk encampments as of March 1, 2023. There were 53 known individuals living rough, 17 were residing at 100 Victoria Street, Kitchener, 8 were residing at Roos Island, Kitchener, and 28 were residing at 150 Main Street, Cambridge.
- Using the by-name lists, individuals who met the eligibility criteria were given an offer to meet with House of Friendship staff to review suitability for the newly opened emergency shelter on Weber Street in Waterloo. Other individuals, where appropriate, were offered a space at the newly opened Erb's Road outdoor shelter. The results of these offers for each individual have been tracked up until Thursday May 11, 2023.

- The chart below provides a breakdown of the number of individuals who have:
 - moved into ShelterCare at the House Of Friendship (HOF), or,
 - moved to Erb’s Road, or,
 - moved to permanent housing

	# of Residents	HOF	Erb’s Road	Subtotal Outcomes of offers for shelter	Other ¹	Remaining Residents
100 Victoria Street	17	2	6	8	0	9
Roos Island	8	1	4	5	1	2
150 Main Street	28	4	9	13	2	13
Total	53	7	19	26	3	24

¹includes Shelter or Permanent Housing

- The attached visual, ‘Offers of Shelter’ depicts the outcome for each individual on site as of the snapshot in time (Appendix A).
- Staff will continue to update Regional Council on outreach efforts to transition individuals continuing to live unsheltered at one of the high-risk encampments.

5. Background

In May of 2022, Ontario Works Housing Stability Workers (OWHSW) began visiting the residents of 100 Victoria Street, Kitchener alongside funded outreach partners from The Working Centre, oneRoof and Lutherwood. A number of other community agencies and supports have also connected at the site to offer individualized supports and services.

Similarly, in September 2022 OWHSW staff, alongside funded outreach partners from Cambridge Food Bank, oneRoof and Lutherwood, began visiting the residents at 150 Main Street, Cambridge and at Roos Island, Kitchener.

In the late fall of 2022, staff from Regional By-law and Facilities Operations also began visiting the high-risk encampments at 100 Victoria Street, and 150 Main Street daily. As of January 2023, By-law and Facilities Operations staff attend the encampments three

times per week. The purpose of these visits is to engage encampment residents to maintain fire safety and reduce health hazards.

With the opening in February 2023 of ShelterCare, operated by the House of Friendship (HOF) and the anticipated opening of the newly created outdoor shelter site at 1001 Erb's Road, Housing staff and funded outreach partners further increased efforts beginning in March of 2023 to connect with and offer individuals a space at either location.

6. Area Municipality Communication and Public/Stakeholder Engagement and Communication.

Through the Region's role as Service Manager and Community Entity, Region staff regularly engage with area municipalities on work to end chronic homelessness. Through a Municipal Housing and Homelessness Leads Committee, Region staff remain closely connected with area municipalities in the collective work of addressing housing and homelessness related issues in the region.

Regional staff continue to meet weekly with area municipal staff, police, street outreach, and community partners as part of the Encampment Operations Table. The purpose of these weekly meetings is to ensure the continued structured and coordinated approach to supporting people in the encampments to transition voluntarily to housing or safer shelter options.

Discussions about the formation of a youth-focused Encampment Operations Table were had in the fall/winter of 2022. Regional staff and community partners elected not to start a youth focused table, as there were no youth present in the encampments at the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023, so key community partners supporting youth joined the Encampment Operations Table to stay connected to encampment supports.

In the spring of 2023, youth-serving partners (e.g., one ROOF, SafeHaven, Family & Children's Services) began meeting and having discussions related to a group of youth who were experiencing homelessness and not accessing housing or placements. Youth partners continue to meet to discuss service coordination and approaches to better support these youth and updates on these efforts are brought to the Encampment Operations Table.

7. Financial Implications:

The Region provides services to the unsanctioned encampment sites located at 100 Victoria St., Kitchener and 150 Main St., Cambridge. The associated operating costs for the period January to April 2023 are approximately \$267,000. Investments related to outreach and offers of shelter are covered in the operating budgets of the Region and outreach partners.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

The next steps described in this report can be succinctly summarized as follows:

- Staff will continue working with outreach partners to offer individualized supports to those individuals remaining at the 3 high-risk encampments, as well as to those living rough at all encampments across Waterloo Region.
- Staff will continue to update Regional Council on these efforts to support individuals to transition to safer sheltering options.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Offers of Shelter

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