
MEMORANDUM**COM-C 22-2021**

Subject: Activities related to Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan for March, April and May 2021

Date: June 15, 2021

To: Public Health & Social Services Committee

From: Adrienne Jugley, Commissioner, Community Services

Further to Council's direction in October 2019 (COM 40-2019), staff continue to provide regular updates about activities, local targets, outcomes and challenges related to Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP), as new information is available.

The following highlights activities related to the HHAP in March, April, and May 2021:

- Niagara Counts 2021, Niagara's third homelessness point-in-time count (PiT count), took place on March 23, 2021. A PiT count is intended to provide a picture of homelessness at a single point in time through a homeless enumeration and an accompanying survey. As a consequence of the pandemic, planned Indigenous magnet events, in collaboration with Indigenous-led service providers, were unable to take place. As a result, the interim report will recognize that critical input from local Indigenous communities is still needed to ensure that the experiences and extent of Indigenous homelessness in Niagara is represented and heard. Given all the challenges of the pandemic, the 2021 count was still a success, with great learnings, new partnerships and processes that will continue and expand because of the PiT count. Because of changes enacted to protect the health and safety of everyone involved, the results of the 2021 PiT Count may not be directly comparable to those of years past.
- Staff began to develop an updated homelessness prevention framework. The work to date includes a review of the evidence and best practices, gathering local homelessness data to determine greatest needs and potential for impact, reconvening the HHAP prevention committee and the development of a community engagement strategy. The updated prevention framework will:
 - Support the goals of system transformation and the HHAP.
 - Be grounded in Built for Zero and Housing First principles to end chronic homelessness

- Be guided by evidence and best and promising practices
- A task group, including staff and community partners, was launched to address risks and potential barriers that Niagara's common assessment tools may present for women, youth, Indigenous people, and other priority populations trying to access homelessness services. The group will use an intersectional lens as it explores an array of tools and practices. Common assessment tools are used to assist in prioritizing and matching people to the right housing and supports to meet their needs. Common assessment is a federal requirement, a key component of Built for Zero, and essential in ending homelessness.
- To support continued system transformation, staff began to develop a revised data strategy to support outcome measurement. The work to date consisted of developing principles, framework and approach, and scanning municipalities and publications for best and promising practices. Initial work identified 280 performance measures across all areas of homeless services delivery. The measures are being prioritized for further refinement to support strategic priorities, and provincial and federal requirements.
- New development highlights include:
 - An affordable four-plex in St. Catharines and duplex in Thorold (Oonuhseh Niagara Native Homes) with construction underway and occupancy targeted for April 2021
 - Hawkins Avenue development in Niagara Falls, with 73 units (NRH) with construction 53% completed and on track for occupancy in January 2022.
 - POA land Welland development project with 32 units (NRH) planned. This will be an innovative four-storey modular construction build, which is currently delayed pending future RHI (Rapid Housing Initiative) federal funding opportunities or alternate funding sources are confirmed. This build would have an anticipated 10-month construction schedule.
 - The current development of an RFP with City of Niagara Falls for an affordable housing apartment with 200 units, including 50 RGI units to be subsidized by NRH.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Adrienne Jugley, Commissioner