
Executive Summary

York Region's Community Plan to Address Homelessness – Update (the Update) has been developed in response to the extension of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI).

Overview of SCPI Initiative

In July 2003, York Region received confirmation from the federal government that the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) would be extended for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2006. This initiative recognizes that no single level of government or sector of our society can solve homelessness and it encourages new partnerships to be formed with all levels of government, as well as private and volunteer sectors. The Region was allocated \$1,626,865 for the second three-year period of the initiative. A requirement of receiving funding is the completion of an update to the original York Region Community Plan to Address Homelessness (the Plan) which was developed and published in 2001.

Purpose of the Community Plan Update

The Community Plan is intended by the federal government to provide a focal point for joint community action and to achieve the following objectives:

- To give community service organizations a framework within which to work together to achieve common goals;
- To assist the community to make the best possible use of scarce resources by reducing overlap and duplication;
- To enable the community to evaluate its progress in reaching its shared objectives; and,
- To set a common vision for the identification of matching funding for SCPI funds.

Community Plan Development & Implementation

Every attempt was made to ensure that the planning process for both the Plan and the Update were representative of the views and needs of all stakeholders. The Community Planning Group provided overall guidance and stakeholders across the Region had several opportunities to participate in identifying priority issues and target areas.

Process for Development of the Update

The process undertaken to update the Plan included hiring a Facilitator, consulting with the Alliance to End Homelessness in York Region, undertaking working sessions with the Community Planning Group, reviewing existing documents, incorporating the preliminary findings of the Homelessness Evaluation, surveying primary community agencies serving the homeless, obtaining input from Aboriginal organizations and obtaining input from youth or youth serving organizations.

Process for Implementation of the Update

Once the Update was endorsed by the Alliance to End Homelessness in York Region, the Region and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSD), staff from the Community Services and Housing Department is responsible for implementing the Update.

It is anticipated that the Update will be a catalyst for action by community agencies, funders and government. It is also an important tool for the community to advance its way of thinking about homelessness. Most agencies involved in providing services in the Region will use the Update to improve service delivery, as they did when the Plan was released in 2001. Community agencies will review the gaps identified in the Update and find ways for their agency to address one or more of these gaps, either by changing the way they provide their service, partnering with other agencies, or requesting new funding dollars. Agencies may also use the information in the Update to support their funding requests and to obtain information about services provided by other agencies.

Special effort will be undertaken to include Aboriginal Organizations and Youth or Youth Serving Organizations in the implementation of the Update.

Objectives & Principles of the Community Plan

The goal of the Update is to build upon the long-term strategies to address homelessness issues identified in the Plan. The community's objectives are supportive of the Government of Canada's long-term objectives on homelessness and contribute to the sustainability of community efforts. The objectives that York Region hopes to achieve by March 31, 2006, through the implementation of the Update are:

Short-term Objectives (2003 to 2005)

- 1) increase number of beds available in shelters;
- 2) promote a "continuum of supports" approach;
- 3) strengthen the capacity;

- 4) bring community service providers together to develop plans that address common needs;
- 5) promote collaborative processes and partnerships; and
- 6) develop a data base and expertise about homelessness.

Long term objectives have also been identified that will guide the community in planning the way in which it addresses homelessness. These objectives are as follows:

Long-term Objectives (5 Years +)

- 1) ensure no individuals are involuntarily on the streets;
- 2) significantly reduce number of individuals requiring emergency shelter and transitional and supportive housing;
- 3) help individuals move to self-sufficiency;
- 4) strengthen community capacity to address needs; and,
- 5) improve the health, social and economic well being of people who are homeless or at risk.

Supports to Sustainability

Partnership development and community capacity building are viewed as essential elements to achieving SCPI's overall objective of ensuring the sustainable capacity of communities to address homelessness. The Update identifies community projects and activities that will contribute to partnership development, capacity building and, ultimately, sustainability.

Communication Strategy

A co-ordinated and effective communications strategy for the Community Plan Update development and implementation process is an important element in the success and the sustainability of a community's efforts on homelessness. The Update identifies the objectives of the community's communications plan and the corresponding activities and target groups.

Assets and Gaps in Supports and Services

In order to define what the York Region community envisions as the necessary components of its continuum of supports, an inventory of the existing supports

and services, the demand for these services, and gaps were identified in the development of the original Community Plan to Address Homelessness. As part of the Update process, all community agencies identified in the original plan were contacted to update their information on assets and gaps and to identify any other agency which should be added to the inventory.

The Update summarizes what services and supports currently exist in York Region, the demand for these services and gaps in shelter, supports and services.

Priority Issues and Funding

One of the key elements of a Community Plan is to identify priority issues or areas of greatest need for homeless people in the York Region community based on the community's objectives and the analysis of the assets and gaps. The following are the community's priorities. Potential corresponding activities for each priority are outlined in the Update.

Community Priority #1

There is a crisis in affordable housing supply in York Region.

Community Priority #2

Supports and services for homeless people and families, and those who are at risk of becoming homeless, are limited.

Community Priority #3

There is a limited number of shelter beds.

Community Priority #4

Demographics of the clientele are changing, as is their geographic distribution.

Community Priority #5

Risk of homelessness is increased with mental health or substance abuse problems.

Community Priority #6

Violence against women often drives women and children from their home.

Community Priority #7

Youth (12-29 year olds) are a significant group of the homeless population and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Community Priority #8

There is a need for improved health services for homeless people and those who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Community Priority #9

There is a need for more public education and advocacy on homelessness in York Region.

Community Priority #10

There is a need to mitigate the impacts of poverty.

Community's Financial Contribution

Under the terms of SCPI, a matching financial contribution is required from the community. Funds must be non-federal and used to address homelessness in the community over the three-year period of SCPI to be eligible as community contributions.

The Community Planning Group has identified funds eligible to match SCPI from the Region and the Government of Ontario which will exceed the Federal contribution.

Evaluation Strategy

The Community Planning Group has identified five major measurable outcomes that the community will use to measure the progress and success of their efforts.

Each individual initiative will be evaluated in terms of the extent the initiative achieved agreed upon targets or the extent to which the contracted service providers complied with the terms and conditions of their contractual agreement.