

Clause 14 in Report No. 15 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on November 16, 2017.

14

New 'Home Now' Program for People who are  
Chronically Homeless

Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendations contained in the report dated October 19, 2017 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. Council authorize implementation of the new Home Now program as described in Attachment 1.
2. Council enter into an agreement(s) for provision of the Home Now program at a total estimated cost of \$5,385,000 gross (\$0 net) including HST on the following terms:
  - a) The term of the Agreement be for two years commencing on December 1, 2017 and expiring on November 30, 2019, with the option to extend for an additional one-year period.
  - b) The Region be permitted to terminate the Agreement for any reason on two months' notice.
3. Council delegate authority to award contracts pursuant to Request for Proposal (P-17-100) with a total cost exceeding \$2,000,000 to the CAO for the provision of the Home Now Program.
4. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services be authorized to execute the Agreement(s) and any renewals on behalf of the Region.

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Report dated October 19, 2017 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services now follows:

## 1. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Council authorize implementation of the new Home Now program as described in Attachment 1.
2. Council enter into an agreement(s) for provision of the Home Now program at a total estimated cost of \$5,385,000 gross (\$0 net) including HST on the following terms:
  - a. The term of the Agreement be for two years commencing on December 1, 2017 and expiring on November 30, 2019, with the option to extend for an additional one-year period.
  - b. The Region be permitted to terminate the Agreement for any reason on two months' notice.
3. Council delegate authority to award contracts pursuant to Request for Proposal (P-17-100) with a total cost exceeding \$2,000,000 to the CAO for the provision of the Home Now Program.
4. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services be authorized to execute the Agreement(s) and any renewals on behalf of the Region.

## 2. Purpose

This report recommends implementation of a new, 100% provincially funded program to be delivered by community agencies on behalf of the Region to help people who are chronically homeless to find and keep housing.

## 3. Background and Previous Council Direction

In 2012, Council approved a Vision for homelessness prevention and housing stability services

In [November 2012](#), Council adopted a vision focused on promoting housing stability through a coordinated, integrated service delivery model that proactively helps people who are homeless to obtain housing, and people at risk of homelessness to remain housed. The vision is rooted in evidence-based research that proves it costs less to help people sustain housing than to manage crisis or rehouse an individual or family who have become homeless. Council's

vision guides investments and service planning to strengthen York Region's homelessness and housing stability system.

The Region's priorities for strengthening the service system are outlined in York Region's 10-Year Housing Plan, [Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone](#).

The Province and York Region have committed to end chronic homelessness by 2025

York Region is the system manager for a range of human services (e.g. housing, homelessness, children's services), as mandated by the provincial government. As the system manager for homelessness, the Region is responsible for the planning, oversight and delivery of homelessness prevention and housing stability services.

In 2013, as part of its Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the Province launched the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. Consistent with York Region's vision, the provincial initiative is guided by a vision of promoting a better coordinated and integrated service delivery system. The delivery system is to be people-centered, outcome-focused and reflect a Housing First approach to prevent, reduce and address homelessness. The Provincial direction is to shift from reactive programs to proactive programs, with permanent solutions based on two key outcomes:

- People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing
- People at risk of homelessness remain housed

Over the next four years, the Region will receive an additional \$5,165,484 in provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding. The most recent new Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding allocations were based on a new provincial funding model using indicators that capture specific at-risk populations: people who are chronically homeless, youth and indigenous peoples. This new funding will be used to increase capacity and expand the range of supports for homelessness and housing stability programs in York Region, including investments to address the chronic homelessness.

In 2016, it was estimated that there were 239 chronically homeless individuals in the Region

In 2017, the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative program guidelines were revised to include a focus on addressing chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness refers to individuals who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months in the past year (i.e. living in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation). People who are chronically homeless often also have

disabling conditions such as chronic physical or mental illness, or substance abuse problems.

In [October 2016](#), Council adopted a joint report by York Region and United Way of Toronto and York Region about the number of people who were homeless in the Region. The research found that in 2015, there were 1,103 unique individuals who stayed in emergency/transitional housing facilities and seasonal shelters\*. The research also found that people who were chronically homeless comprised 21 per cent to 33 per cent of the total number of people who accessed homelessness services and supports in York Region that year.

The number of people who are homeless continues to increase. Additional emergency housing beds were added with the opening of the Richmond Hill Youth Hub and Belinda's Place. In 2016, there were 1,554 unique individuals using York Region's emergency housing services. Of these, 239 were chronically homeless.

\*These numbers reflect use of York Region's emergency housing services only; they do not include individuals who are homeless and not using shelters, or who have had incidences of homelessness outside of York Region.

#### 4. Analysis and Implications

York Region has been awarded additional provincial funding of approximately \$1.5 million over three years to help address chronic homelessness

The provincial Home for Good Initiative is homelessness-focused funding that supports the Province's goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025. It consists of funding for housing assistance and support services for people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

In May 2017, York Region submitted an Expression of Interest for funding to the Provincial Home for Good Initiative. The Region's submission proposed implementing a new program that would blend new provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding and Home for Good funding into a single 'made in York Region' program called "Home Now".

The Province received 46 strong proposals for this funding. In September 2017, the Region was advised it was one of the successful applicants and was approved for operating funding of over \$1.5 million over three years. This new funding will be used to 'top up' the new Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative allocation to create the Home Now Program.

York Region's New Home Now program will be based on Housing First principles and best practices

Research has shown that supporting people who are chronically homeless to be successful in permanent housing requires services tailored to the specific needs and situation of the individual.

Home Now is based on the Housing First approach. This evidence-based, recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness moves people who are chronically homeless into permanent housing as quickly as possible, with no preconditions. It provides them with additional supports as needed to be successful, long term tenants. The underlying principle of Housing First is that people are more successful in moving forward with their lives and addressing the issues that may have led to their homelessness (such as mental and physical health issues, substance use, and unemployment) if they are first housed. In contrast, other approaches have typically required people to have addressed substance abuse or other issues before "earning" the right to a home, or to "graduate" into a home after living in a shelter.

Design of the Home Now program was informed by national and international best practices, modified to meet the needs of York Region

Home Now is consistent with the findings of the At Home/Chez Soi project, a five-year research demonstration study by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Four year projects were implemented in five Canadian cities (Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Montreal and Moncton). The study found that:

- Housing First can be effective in cities of different sizes and cultural compositions and can effectively end homelessness.
- The Housing First approach was successful in keeping 62 per cent of participants stably housed. In the City of Toronto, 84 percent of participants found and kept housing during the study period.
- Wrap around support and services were offered after clients were permanently housed that were client centred, reliable and recovery based. Having a place to live with the appropriate supports can lead to other positive outcomes such as improvements in substance abuse and mental health symptoms.

Housing First programs have proven to be cost effective and have a positive return on investment

Broad research including a review of programs in other municipalities such as Waterloo, Hamilton, Toronto and London confirmed that Housing First programs lead to better quality of life and psycho-social outcomes for individuals. People who have been chronically homeless and assisted by Housing First programs are less likely to use costly emergency responses such as emergency housing, emergency health care and emergency medical services.

The At Home/Chez Soi study demonstrated that the implementation of a Housing First model for a chronically homeless population is a cost effective and sound investment. Over the two-year period after participants entered the study, the study demonstrated that every \$10 invested in Housing First services resulted in an average savings of \$21.72 (in areas such as emergency housing/shelters, emergency services, hospital use, etc.).

Existing Housing First programs in York Region will not meet the provincial target of ending chronic homelessness by 2025

In York Region, there are currently two Housing First programs, both delivered by community-based organizations:

- **Housing To Health:** this program is funded by United Way Toronto & York Region through the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy and delivered by a community collaborative (Blue Door Shelters, LOFT Crosslinks Housing & Support Services and the Krasman Centre). Since January 2016, it has housed 25 participants. It provides housing and case management supports, but not rent assistance.
- **Canadian Mental Health Association's Housing First Program:** this program, funded by the Central Local Health Integration Network, provides intensive peer support, case management, nursing care and occupational therapy and rent benefits. The program serves approximately 30 participants who live in York Region and/or Simcoe County.

Both of these housing first programs support chronically homeless individuals to become permanently housed, and provide wrap around supports and services to help them stay housed. They have demonstrated that a housing first approach can be successful in York Region.

However, the capacity of these Housing First programs is limited and cannot meet the needs or serve the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in York Region. More Housing First programs are needed. Through the Home Now Program, York Region will work collaboratively with Housing To Health and the Canadian Mental Health Association's Housing First

## New Home Now Program for People who are Chronically Homeless

Program to leverage funding from all housing first programs in York Region to address chronic homelessness. Home Now will provide additional investments in Housing First Programs that will increase capacity and help move the Region towards the goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

The Home Now program will provide essential supports to chronically homeless individuals to help them become housed and reintegrate into the community

Many York Region residents who are chronically homeless cycle in and out of emergency housing, seasonal shelters, live in precarious housing situations, and/or sleep in accommodations not fit for human habitation (e.g. outdoors, cars). Many spend lengthy periods of time without a permanent home. The Home Now program will help people who are chronically homeless, and who have complex needs such as mental health issues, substance abuse issues and/or a history of abuse or trauma. Admission to the program will be prioritized based on the highest level of need and the longest time a resident has been homeless.

Program delivery will be based on Housing First principles. Home Now will help promote long-term housing stability for individuals by providing:

- Case management support to set personal goals (e.g. tenancy, health, employment skills) and facilitate access to supports and services in the community
- Specialized case management supports for people with mental health and/or addictions issues that impede their ability to find and keep housing
- Housing supports (e.g. housing searches, landlord and tenant supports) and rent assistance

Providing both case management and rent assistance is proven to be effective in helping people who are chronically homeless to achieve housing stability.

Home Now will be delivered by community agencies selected through a Request for Proposal process

Home Now services will be delivered on behalf of the Region by community agencies selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The Region, as system manager and contract manager, will provide oversight, capacity building and support as appropriate. Having Home Now delivered by community agencies is preferred because of their knowledge and experience in working with people who are chronically homeless. They are best able to leverage services and strengths within the community. In addition, this approach will build further the Region's and community's capacity in how to best serve this vulnerable population.

A Request for Proposal for the delivery of the Home Now program is underway in accordance with the Region's Purchasing By-law. Proponent(s) will be evaluated on both technical and financial merit including qualifications, experience, knowledge of service objectives, methodology and deliverables. The Evaluation Committee will consist of internal staff and United Way of Toronto and York Region staff.

This report recommends that Council delegate authority to award contracts pursuant to Request for Proposal (P-17-100) with a total cost exceeding \$2,000,000 to the CAO for the provision of the Home Now Program. This is necessary to implement the program as soon as possible given that the new Home For Good funding is time limited.

Home Now will support Council's commitment under Vision 2051, the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan and the 10-Year Housing Plan

The Home Now program, if approved, will support the goals and commitment made in *Vision 2051, A Place Where Everyone Can Thrive*, the 2015 to 2019 Strategic Plan priority area of Community Health and Well-being and York Region's 10-Year Housing Plan, *Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone* goal area of strengthening the homelessness and housing stability system.

Continued investment in programs that help residents find and keep permanent housing will strengthen the homelessness and housing stability system, and reduce the number of York Region residents who are chronically homeless.

## 5. Financial Considerations

The Home Now Program will be 100% provincially funded, with no tax levy impact

The Home Now program, if approved, will operate with an annual budget of \$1,850,000 gross (\$0 net) funded by two provincial programs, and will operate for as long as provincial funding is available:

- The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative: The 2017 approved budget for York Region's Homelessness Community Programs is \$20.6 million gross (\$8.2 million net).
- Home for Good: The Province has approved \$1,584,000 gross (\$0 net) over three years in provincial funding through the Home For Good Initiative. Contracts for service delivery will begin in December 2017. The new funding will be included in the 2018 Community and Health Services Operating Budget.

Details of the Provincial funding sources that will be used to support this program are highlighted in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Provincial Funding Details**

Provincial Funding Source	Allocation
Home For Good Program*	\$550,000
Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative	\$1,300,000
<b>Total Annual Home Now Budget</b>	<b>\$1,850,000</b>

\*10% of contribution will be allocated for Home For Good Regional Program Administration and will not be awarded through Agreements for the provision of service

The total estimated costs of the agreement(s) with community agencies to provide the Home Now service will total \$1,795,000 per year. The remaining program funds will support administration of the Home Now program by the Region.

## 6. Local Municipal Impact

The Home Now program will provide critical housing and support services to people who are chronically homeless throughout York Region. Investments will support people who are chronically homeless to find and keep housing.

## 7. Conclusion

York Region is prosperous. However, like many communities in Canada, there is a growing population of residents who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. While homelessness in York Region is a temporary issue for most, it can be a longer-term problem for some. A number of residents cycle in and out of homelessness and/or stay homeless for lengthy periods of time. Without action, the economic as well as social costs of chronic homelessness continue to grow.

Housing First programs have proven to be successful in addressing chronic homelessness by helping individuals who have been struggling with long term housing instability and homelessness to find and keep housing. If approved, the Region's Home Now program will help support York Region residents experiencing chronic homelessness to access permanent housing, and keep it, by providing case management and housing-based supports, and assistance with rent payments.

## New Home Now Program for People who are Chronically Homeless

The Region is in a unique position to use evidence-based models to mitigate the growth of chronic homelessness. This initiative is one of a number that the Region has implemented or is planning to help achieve the goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services at 1-877-464-9675, Extension 72150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

October 19, 2017

Attachment (1)

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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request

## **YORK REGION'S HOME NOW PROGRAM KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVE**

The objective of Home Now is to help individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness find and keep permanent housing by providing them with:

1. Case management support to help them find and keep permanent housing
2. Housing-based accommodation supports and rent assistance
3. Specialized case management supports for mental health challenges and addictions

### **KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

York Region's Home Now Program will assist individuals to end their chronic homelessness by providing:

- Housing-based accommodation supports with rent assistance to find and secure permanent housing as quickly as possible and promote successful tenancies
- Case Management supports using a recovery-based model and providing individualized case plans, goal setting, tenancy skills, employment / income, health and well-being and engaging with community-based services to promote long-term housing stability

### **SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO BE PROVIDED**

**Housing-Based Accommodation Support Services** include:

- Individual supports to help program participants find and keep housing, such as assistance finding rental housing, arranging a lease, and understanding tenant rights and obligations
- Landlord engagement and support
- Accessing services that already exist in York Region related to housing-based accommodation support services (e.g. furniture bank, moving supports)

**Rent Assistance** includes:

- Monthly rent assistance for eligible participants of Home Now in addition to assistance available from existing income support programs to help bridge to a market rent
- Rents paid directly to participating landlords to support housing stability and landlord recruitment

**Case Management Support Services** include:

- Qualified and experienced case management with a low case manager to client service ratio
- Regular in-home supports to help clients identify personal goals, coordinate other services as required, and to assist client with implementing their outcome plans
- Case management may include peer supports, with demonstrated experience working with chronically homeless people
- 24/7 support is provided as needed

**Specialized Counselling and Wrap-Around Support Services** include:

- Assistance to access and navigate mental health and addiction services available in the community, and offering immediate supports while residents are waiting to access longer term supports

**ELIGIBILITY**

Home Now will serve York Region residents who:

- Are experiencing chronic homelessness
- Have complex needs that are barriers to maintaining stable housing (e.g. mental health issues, substance use issues, physical health issues, experience of abuse or trauma, history of exploitation)
- Meet a threshold acuity score. This is determined through a standard assessment tool that considers the multiple needs and barriers faced by each program participant

Priority access to the program will be given to individuals with the level of highest acuity (i.e. highest level of need) and with the longest amount of time spent homeless.

**PROGRAM DELIVERY**

Home Now will be delivered by community service providers on behalf of and under the direction of the Region.

**IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMING**

Home Now will be delivered in collaboration with community service providers through purchase of service agreements, promoting partnerships and collaboration to support chronically homeless individuals in York Region find and keep permanent housing.

Home Now contracts are anticipated to be signed in December 2017, with program initiation as soon as possible thereafter.

**PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Home Now will move individuals who are chronically homeless into permanent housing and help them remain housed through active intervention and wraparound support services.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Number of chronically homeless individuals housed per month
- Number of participants remaining housed at 6, 12, 18 and 24 months
- Number of Home Now participant referrals' and enrolment into other community programs (e.g. training and education programs, mental health services, addiction services)
- Number of Home Now participants reporting improved mental health
- Number of Home Now participants meeting their personally defined goals