

To: Council in Committee of the Whole

From: Paul D. Ralph, City Manager,  
Office of the City Manager

Report Number: CNCL-19-62

Date of Report: September 30, 2019

Date of Meeting: October 3, 2019

Subject: City's Efforts to Assist Those Living Unsheltered

File: A-2100

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## **1.0 Purpose**

On June 10, 2019, City Council adopted the following resolution:

“That the City of Oshawa host a meeting with interested parties to address the negative impacts of individuals living in area greenspaces including the negative impacts of thefts and other resultant impacts on neighbouring residential communities.”

A Special Council meeting has been scheduled for October 3, 2019. Issues related to the unsheltered are complex. These issues are not unique to Oshawa since many other urban areas across the world are experiencing similar challenges. It is hoped that at the October 3, 2019 meeting, information will be provided on what other various agencies/organizations/stakeholders are doing to assist those that are unsheltered and provide an opportunity to discuss potential solutions and lead to more collaboration.

The purpose of this report is to provide City Council with information on some of the work being undertaken by the City related to this matter.

## **2.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended to City Council:

That Report CNCL-19-62 dated September 30, 2019 concerning the City's efforts to assist those living unsheltered (File A-2100) be received for information.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

N/A.

## **4.0 Input From Other Sources**

- Community Services Department
- Corporate Services Department
- Development Services Department
- Finance Services Department

By emails dated September 20, 2019, the following agencies/organizations/stakeholders were informed of the October 3, 2019 meeting.

- Back Door Mission
- CAMH Durham: The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Carea Community Health Services
- Cornerstone
- DIRE
- Downtown BIA
- Durham College
- Durham Region Health Department
- Durham Region Housing Services
- Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corporation
- Durham Region Social Services Department
- Durham Regional Police
- Feed the Need
- Gate 3:16
- Health Canada
- John Howard Society of Durham Region
- Lakeridge Health Oshawa – Pinewood
- Ministry of Health and Long-term Care
- Ontario Shores
- Ontario Tech University
- Primary Care Outreach Program
- Salvation Army
- Simcoe Settlement House
- Spirit of Service
- St. Vincent's Kitchen
- The GAP Committee
- The Refuge Youth Outreach Centre
- Trent University Durham GTA
- Jennifer French, MPP for Oshawa
- Lindsey Park, MPP for Durham
- Colin Carrie, MP for Oshawa
- Erin O'Toole, MP for Durham
- John Henry, Chair Region of Durham

A number of these agencies/organizations/stakeholders have indicated they will be making a presentation at the meeting. In addition, on September 9, 2019, an advance meeting notice was posted on the City's website, Twitter and Facebook accounts and distributed to those who subscribe to receive Council Agendas.

## 5.0 Analysis

The City is supporting change by finding innovative ways to help those who are unsheltered and most vulnerable in our community while building partnerships with others such as service organizations and other cities to find solutions. The following initiatives are examples:

**Oshawa Unsheltered Residents (O.U.R.) Task Force:** Achieving a healthy city for all requires a collective effort. Recognizing this, the City took action in May 2018 to bring together the Region of Durham, Durham Region Police Service, Region's Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP), CAREA Community Health Centre, Cornerstone, Salvation Army, John Howard Society and other service providers to address the issue of unsheltered residents in Oshawa. These City-initiated meetings resulted in the O.U.R. Task force being established in July 2018. Now led by the Region, the O.U.R. Task Force is committed to helping individuals in need of shelter and social services and providing connections to support and services. Through various collective interactions, approximately 56 individuals have obtained housing.

**On Point Pilot Program:** City staff brought the idea of a needle clean-up pilot project to the O.U.R. Task Force and, as a result, the On Point pilot program was launched in July 2019 by the City of Oshawa, the Region of Durham and John Howard Society. This out-of-the-box solution was led by City staff, who saw an opportunity to bring a unique solution to address the health and safety issue of used needles and drug paraphernalia being discarded in our parks and greenspaces and other public spaces.

The pilot program involves the removal of dangerous needles and other drug paraphernalia from Oshawa parks/greenspaces and other public spaces and provides employment and support to participants with "lived experience" of homelessness. On Point participants receive supervision, safety kits and training to assist with the cleanup of needles and other drug paraphernalia left behind in identified priority parks and greenspaces in Oshawa. In addition to training and employment, program participants are also provided with housing outreach services and other community resources to help gain the experience to transition to long-term employment.

On Point is being partially funded through the Community Homeless Prevention Initiative (C.H.P.I.). The initial funding amount for this project is \$104,400:

- C.H.P.I. is contributing a baseline amount of approximately \$63,000
- The City of Oshawa is contributing \$36,400 for the wages of the individuals
- The Region of Durham is providing the safety/equipment kits for the program participants (approximately \$5,000) as well as evaluating the program

We are measuring the success of the program. Since July 31, 2019, over 3,155 used needles and over 10,455 pieces of drug paraphernalia have been collected and disposed of properly. The pilot project will continue until March 31, 2020.

**Safe Needle Disposal Units:** Launched by the City in collaboration with John Howard Society, 14 safe needle disposal units have been installed in priority City parks and greenspaces. John Howard Society monitors the units and takes care of the proper disposal of the sharps collected in the bins. The City and the Region (approximately \$2,000 per unit) have shared the cost of the units.

**Welcoming Streets:** On September 25, 2019, Oshawa City Council approved a partnership between the City, Downtown Oshawa B.I.A., and C.A.R.E.A. Community Health Centre that will see targeted outreach services provided to individuals and businesses in downtown Oshawa. The pilot Welcoming Streets project is based on the City of Guelph's program.

The 6-month pilot program offers outreach support through a community based Outreach Worker, who works collaboratively with the existing social services network and bridges the gap between vulnerable people and businesses by building positive, trusting relationships with individuals who have complex needs. Through the partnership, the Downtown Oshawa B.I.A. and Carea Community Health Centre will jointly lead the Oshawa's Welcoming Streets pilot project, with the support of the City of Oshawa.

The City's contribution is \$50,224 and will be used to cover the costs associated with the Outreach Workers and de-escalation training,

**City Budget and Reports:** During 2019 City Budget deliberations, Council approved the allocation of \$200,000 in the 2019 operating budget to support the O.U.R. Program Initiatives related to unsheltered residents such as used needle recovery. The additional funding will provide the City with a contingency to manage this issue and to participate with various agencies and partners and to support other related initiatives as directed by Council.

Council also directed that a report on the "trail clean up and enforcement including actions taken to date, costs and potential fire hazards" (CORP-19-53) be prepared.

**Financial Incentives for Affordable Housing:** For years, the City has provided a City development charge exemption for development on non-profit institutional land including the development of affordable housing. On June 10, 2019, City Council approved a new Development Charge By-law 60-2019 which continued to include this exemption. In addition, the City has supported tax incentives under the Investing in Affordable Housing for Ontario Program (167 units to date).

One of the projects by Cornerstone on Bloor Street East (20 apartment units) will soon be under construction and is taking advantage of the development charge exemption and tax incentives under the Federal/Provincial Housing Program.

**Grants:** The City also has provided financial assistance through grants to organizations such as St. Vincent's Kitchen (Durham Outlook for the Needy), The Refuge, Settlement House and Feed the Need that support those in need.

**Unsheltered Outreach:** Through a collaborative effort – the Region’s PCOP Program, D.R.P.S. mobile response team and the City’s Municipal Law Enforcement team and Corporate Security Services and community service providers, every step possible is taken to connect individuals in our community with services and shelter.

The safety and health of all community members is a priority of the City of Oshawa and we will continue to explore new opportunities to assist those who are vulnerable in our community.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications directly related to the recommendation in this report.

## **7.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan**

Holding a public meeting advances the Accountable Leadership goal in the Oshawa Strategic Plan.



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