

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 15, 2023
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: John Ritz, Homelessness and Housing Stability Supervisor
Kehlar Hillyer, Housing Stability Policy and Program Coordinator
Report Number: SOC23-022
Attachments: None

Title: Enhancements to the Homelessness Response in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County

Objective: This report is presented to the Mayor and Council for information purposes to raise awareness in the community of an additional homelessness response during the cold weather months between November and March, available for individuals sleeping rough.

Background: As part of the City of Stratford's Coordinated Response to Unsheltered individuals (a response that has been adapted across the service area) Outreach staff are regularly checking in with individuals experiencing homelessness and offering connections to services, referrals to community partners, Emergency Housing solutions, and temporary supplies to assist while working collaboratively to secure permanent stable housing.

As a component of this coordinated response, outreach staff from the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Stratford Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, Community Paramedic program, and the Canadian Mental Health Association, who provide support to the homeless population are piloting a Community Care Kit program. Partners will keep care kits in vehicles to provide to individuals at encampments and sleeping rough. This is anticipated to provide some safety measures ahead of inclement weather when engaging with supports and build trust between Outreach staff, partner agencies, and the individuals receiving supports.

In addition to the Care Kit program, the City of Stratford Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) hopes to increase Outreach Worker visibility in the community through a shared branding approach that will have support staff wearing matching backpacks. This is expected to increase awareness of homelessness supports within the community and for those seeking them.

Analysis: Community Care Kits will consist of a variety of resources and intermediate supplies to individuals at encampments. These kits will be provided on an as needed basis by community partners to individuals and will be equipped with supplies to support individuals during winter months.

Kits will include but are not limited to the following:

- A list of community services and phone numbers in the area in which they are located
- A printout of warming stations and community meals, locations, and times
- Single-use disposable hand and glove warmers
- Gloves and hats
- City of Stratford Transit and PC Connect schedules.
- Lip balm
- A gift card for local establishments
- Reusable water bottle
- Socks

To spread awareness of these services within the communities, matching backpacks for partner support staff will be worn to increase visibility of these services. All staff within supporting roles have been provided a backpack which will be worn during day-to-day activities and when supporting individuals who are most vulnerable within the community. By providing consistent branding across service providers, members of the community either in need of support, or for those who have concern for fellow citizens, will be able to identify a support staff easily to review options of support available.

While the CMSM recognizes this is not a solution for individuals sleeping outside, the goal is to be able to provide essential items while services continue to work with individuals to find permanent stable housing.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

Purchase of the backpacks for support staff, at a cost of \$1,166.85 including HST as well as the care kits, at an approximate cost of \$15-\$20 each will be funded within the current Homelessness Prevention Program budget for 2023.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

There is potential future impact on budgets if data from the pilot project warrants an expansion of the program. The impact, at an estimated cost of \$15-20 per care kit, will be dependant on the number of care kits required and will be assessed as the program progresses.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Enhancement to the Homelessness Response in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County" (SOC23-022), be received for information.

Prepared by:

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Recommended by:

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