



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee

From: Mark Poste, Director of Housing Services

Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2023

HS-23-09

Subject: Increase in Emergency Shelter Spaces

Background:

The County has a purchase of service agreement with Stepping Stone (a non-profit agency in Guelph) to deliver emergency shelter services for people experiencing homelessness in the Wellington service delivery area. In April 2020, two emergency shelters owned and operated by Stepping Stone were ordered to be relocated due to pandemic restrictions. Specifically, emergency shelters services located at 1 Waterloo and Highway 6 were transferred to 23 Gordon (12 hour of operation) and 540 Silvercreek Parkway North (24-hour of operation).

The two vacant locations were then repurposed to offer transitional housing. Stepping Stones directly operated the Highway 6 adult transitional housing site and leased 1 Waterloo to another local non-profit agency, Wyndham House, to offer youth transitional housing on an interim basis while Wyndham House's Bellevue Supportive Housing site was undergoing renovations.

Currently, emergency shelters services are being provided on a permanent basis at 23 Gordon Street (27 beds) and on a temporary basis at 540 Silvercreek Parkway North (50+ beds). The operation of these sites is funded within the 2023 Housing Services budget.

Update:

Emergency shelter data collected by the Housing Services division has shown a rise in the usage of emergency shelter spaces in our area. The number of unique individuals accessing emergency shelters has risen from 52 in 2019, to 79 in 2022. Further, recent data collected (Jan-June 2023) shows that there has been another substantial increase to an average of 105 individuals accessing emergency shelters on a nightly basis – with numbers continuing to increase during the month August 2023.

There is also a rise in the number of families experiencing homelessness in the past years. There was an average of 4 individuals in a family situation in July 2022, and in July 2023, there was an average of 20 individuals in a family situation. Families are also needing emergency shelter services for longer periods of time due to the scarcity of available rental units. The decrease in available spaces in motels and rising rates have made it more difficult to accommodate families motels.

To address the increase in demand for emergency shelter services, staff are requesting an increase to the 2023 Housing Services budget in the amount of \$150,000. This funding be provided to Stepping Stone to support staffing costs to re-open and operate 1 Waterloo and Hwy 6 as emergency shelters to

accommodate 38 individuals from October 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. This will be in addition to their current emergency shelters at 23 Gordon and at 540 Silvercreek Parkway North.

The Waterloo Ave location will operate as substance use-free family shelter (24 hours of operation) with space for up to 16 individuals while the Highway 6 location will operate as a substance use-free male emergency shelter (12 hours of operation) with space for up to 22 individuals.

Financial Implications:

The additional funding of \$150,000 required to staff the increased shelter space from October – December 2023 was not part of the 2023 budget and will require increased municipal contribution. This cost (approximately \$15,000 County and \$135,000 City) will impact the total year-end over expenditure. An updated overall year-end position for all programme areas within social services will be provided to Social Services Committee in October. Any recommended costs for future years will be included in the 2024 Budget and Ten-Year Plan process.

Recommendation:

That an additional municipal contribution of \$150,000 be approved for Housing Services in 2023 to fund the operation of 38 additional emergency shelter spaces from October 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Poste
Director of Housing Services