



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee
From: Luisa Artuso, Social Services Administrator
Date: Wednesday, November 08, 2023
Subject: **2024 100% Municipal Contribution to Sanguen Health Centre**

Background:

On October 11, 2023, the Guelph Wellington Community Health Van presentation was received at Social Service Committee by Lindsay Sprague, Director of Community Programmes, Sanguen Health Centre, Michelle Steingart, Administrator and Clinical Programme Coordinator, Cory Gillies, Team Lead and Social Support and Steph Beaumont, Peer Lead.

On October 27, 2023, Council approved the recommendation that the Guelph-Wellington Community Health Van Team be directed to work with the County Administrator of Social Services to identify needs and funding sources and report back at the November Social Services Committee meeting. This report is to follow up on the recommendation approved by Council.

Update:

About Sanguen Health Centre

Sanguen Health Centre Foundation (Sanguen) is a registered charity and Hepatitis C agency that supports people, including those who use drugs, with the health and social care they need. The individuals that Sanguen works with often experience a high degree of social marginalization because of their mental health struggles, substance use, poverty, and unstable housing.

Sanguen was started in response to a community need. Through his work at Grand River Hospital, Dr. Chris Steingart, an infectious disease specialist, recognized that there were many people living with Hepatitis C in Waterloo Region, and in Guelph-Wellington, who could benefit from medical treatment and support. In 2007, Dr. Steingart left the hospital setting to launch Sanguen Health Centre.

Sanguen provides Hepatitis C testing, treatment, support, outreach, and education in both Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington. Their team partners with other agencies and groups, whenever possible, to enhance their ability to work with patients and clients who have, or who are at-risk of, Hepatitis C.

In addition to specialized Hepatitis C care, Sanguen has extensive experience supporting individuals who are precariously housed and who use drugs. Since 2015 they have partnered with multiple funders, including local municipalities, to expand our harm reduction and primary care services to as

many locations as possible. Since 2021 they have partnered with Health Canada to offer services in the County of Wellington and in the City of Guelph.

In 2017, Sanguen was a recipient of the Province of Ontario's Minister's Medal Honour Roll in recognition of their innovative community health vans. Sanguen launched a safe consumption site in October of 2019 in partnership with the Region of Waterloo. In April 2023, Sanguen was nominated for a United Way Spirit Award for their contributions in the community.

The Guelph/Wellington Community Health Van:

The goal of the Guelph/Wellington Community Health Van is to improve the delivery of social support, essential items, as well as health and harm reduction services to people in urban and rural areas who have traditionally been marginalized due to their drug use, mental health concerns, poverty, HIV or Hepatitis C status and face barriers to accessing traditional support. Essential items include harm reduction supplies, basic hygiene supplies, and food items. The Community Health Van also assists people to become connected to housing services, referrals to emergency shelters, the Ontario Disability Support Programme and Ontario Works.

The Community Health Van can be a first point of connection in local communities where services for those who are experiencing homeless and/or precariously housed are limited or non-existent. The Community Health Van is staffed by a social support worker/team lead (1 FTE), peers with lived experience of homelessness and/or drug use (1 FTE), a registered nurse (.87 FTE), van coordinator (.75 FTE) and trained volunteers.

The Guelph/Wellington staff specialize in Hepatitis C education, testing, referral, and treatment. Peer support workers have lived/living experience of homelessness and/or using drugs and are a first point of connection for support and care for van visitors who use drugs. They offer overdose prevention advice, safer user advice, and new equipment. Staff also provide naloxone distribution, needle exchange, wound care, and COVID-19 support (testing and immunization) from the Community Support Van. Peer workers draw on their lived experience of homelessness to build rapport, offer support, and build trust with the van service users.

Social support staff provide mental health crisis support, crisis de-escalation, and access to emergency psychiatric consultations for many residents in small communities and/or living in encampments who face barriers like distance and transportation to accessing alternative community supports. Additional support provided on the van includes basic needs enhancement (e.g. food, hygiene items such as toothpaste, nutritional supplements such as Ensure, tampons and clothing). Staff also work closely with two local food banks to ensure we have the necessary items to distribute.

Current Schedule of Community Health Van Stops

County of Wellington Locations

Location	Address	Day and Time each Week	Average # of People Served
Arthur	Arthur Public Library 110 Charles St E	Every Wednesday from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm	25 Weekly
Fergus	Melville United Church, 300 St. Andrew St. W	Every other Tuesday from 1:30 to 3:30pm	10 Bi-Weekly
Harriston	Food Bank, 68 Elora St.	Every Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:30 pm	20 Weekly
Mount Forest	United Church, 175 Queen St E	Every other Tuesday from 1:30 to 3:30pm	10 Bi-Weekly
Palmerston	390 Main St E	Every other Tuesday from 11am to 12:30pm	25 Bi-Weekly
Rockwood	Whistle Stop Parking Lot, 154 Main St N	Every other Tuesday from 10:30am to 12:30pm	10 Weekly

City of Guelph Locations

Downtown	90 Carden Street	Every Thursday from 8 to 9pm	10 (down from 60) Weekly
Ecott Place	190 Fife Road	Once per month	15 Monthly
Royal City Mission	50 Quebec St,	Every Thursday from 6 to 8pm	60 Weekly
Waterloo Ave	387 Waterloo Ave	Every Thursday from 5 to 6pm	30 Weekly
Woolwich Ave	576 Woolwich St	Every other Thursday from 11:30 am to 1 pm	20 Bi-Weekly

Current Funding

The total 2023 annual cost to operate the Guelph-Wellington Community Health Van is \$271,898 which is funded largely by a Health Canada grant of \$239,968 (which ends on March 31, 2024), in addition to \$25,000 grant provided annually by TD Bank (2023-2025). The City of Guelph also provides \$11,000 annually for 2023 and 2024.

The Health Canada grant ending in March 31, 2024, poses a significant risk to current services ending or being drastically reduced as of April 1, 2024. Staff recommend for 100% municipal funding to be provided to Sanguen Health Centre to ensure to continued provision of the Community Health Van services in Wellington County. Staff also recommend that Social Services work closely with Sanguen Health Centre to provide increased alignment with social service supports, data collection, and needs analysis of serving vulnerable people equitably across the County. Staff envision that this service can be strengthened to better support those living in unsheltered homelessness to ensure they are

provided with primary care and basic needs while building strong relationships to promote housing first strategies.

Financial Implications:

A County commitment to support 50% of the unfunded costs associated with the Community Health Van would require a contribution of \$90,718 in 2024. This contribution is currently not included in the County's Preliminary 2024 Budget and 10-year plan. Due to the short-term nature of the commitment, this will be funded from the County's Shared Services Reserve resulting in no impact to the municipal tax levy.

Recommendation:

That the County include \$90,718 of 100% municipal funds in the Preliminary 2024 Budget and 10-year plan to be funded from the County Shared Services Reserve for the Sanguen Health Centre to sustain the current level of services provided by the Community Health Van in the County of Wellington; and

That County staff submit a recommendation for ongoing annualized funding to Sanguen Health Centre by September 2024 for increased services that better align with Social Services to commence in January 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luisa Artuso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Social Service Administrator