

## Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members, Community and Protective Services Committee  
**From:** Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development  
**Subject:** Winter Response Program Outcome Report Year-over-Year Comparison  
**Date:** August 15, 2023

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, the following report “Winter Response Program Year-over-Year Comparison” **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

## Executive Summary

Individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness have been supported through an emergency cold weather winter response for the past three years. Each Winter Response was unique in their service delivery, however each focused on bringing individuals in out of the cold while providing basic needs within various programs offered by a multitude of supporting agencies.

*That the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to include a year over year comparison, for the past three years (2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023), on the number of bed days available/occupied, number of bed nights available/occupied, number of hours service bed facility, number of hours service non-bed facility and total expenses, with the Winter Response Program Outcome Report at the August meeting of the Community and Protective Services Committee. (2023-C04) (4.4/10/CPSC)*

The original Winter Response emerged at a time when many agencies were needing to reduce occupancy, find additional space to operate from, while also introducing safety protocols related to the pandemic. This included the City playing a role in the provision of isolating and monitoring spaces for those that were awaiting COVID testing results or had tested positive for COVID. The different and iterative process of the respective Winter Responses makes comparing the three to each previous response difficult without acknowledging the factors from which they came and the intent of each. This report aims to provide a year-over-year comparison of the outcomes of the 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals, focusing on the primary winter months of each response, from December 1 – March 31 of each year with no extensions.

Each Winter Response incorporated life-saving focused resources and housing focused services. The delivery of these services was made possible by several City funded and contracted agencies. Each organization went above and beyond to create a plan, expand their scope of traditional service delivery and produced much needed critical service delivery options. Each organization diligently worked to maximize the use of one-time funding through extended operating hours, introducing new temporary solutions and increasing existing indoor sheltering capacity.

Throughout the process of each Winter Response, the considerations of the ongoing pandemic, the increasing number of individuals experiencing homelessness, and the capacity of the service system factored into the design and implementation of the response. Funds to deliver each response came from a number of sources, but much of each response was supported by the availability of time-limited funding through the Provincial Social Services Relief Funding.

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

This report aligns with the strategic areas of focus in the 2023-2027 City of London Strategic Plan. The City of London Strategic Plan (2023-2027) identifies housing and homelessness as a key area of focus, and housing and homelessness work is identified throughout the Strategic Plan, impacting all areas of life for Londoners.

Some key outcomes that are supported through the investments outlined in this report include:

- The City of London demonstrates leadership and builds partnerships to increase quality, affordable, and supportive housing options.
- London has a robust community system of health, homelessness, housing stability services, policies, procedures and by-laws in place to support individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness or in precarious housing consistent with Council's recognition of the health and homelessness emergency.
- The City of London enhances the confidence of Indigenous Peoples by furthering truth and reconciliation efforts.
- The City of London is a leader in becoming an equitable and inclusive community.
- London is an affordable and supportive community for individuals and families.
- The City of London demonstrates leadership by taking meaningful actions to address and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, gender-based violence, and sexual violence.

### Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019-2024)

London's Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (Housing Stability for All Plan), is the approved guiding document for homeless prevention and housing in the City of London and was developed in consultation with Londoners.

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- 2022-2023 Winter Response Program Outcome Report (CPSC: May 24, 2023)
- 2022-2023 Winter Response and Community Accountability Working Group Funding Reallocation Request (CPSC: April 12, 2023)
- 2022-2023 Winter Response Program and Action and Accountability Working Group Update (CPSC: November 29, 2022)
- City of London 2021-2022 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: April 20, 2022)
- City of London 2020-2021 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (November 2, 2021)
- Update – City of London 2020-2021 Winter Response Program For Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: April 20, 2021)
- City of London 2020-2021 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: December 1, 2020)
- Municipal Council Approval of The Housing Stability Plan 2019 to 2024 as Required Under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (CPSC: December 3, 2019)

### 2.0 Discussion and Considerations

#### 2.1 Background

The Winter Response Program was first implemented in 2020 as an emergency life saving measure as a response to COVID-19 concerns and due to the increasing number of unsheltered individuals living in community. During the pandemic there were very few places available for individuals to get in out of the cold. The 2020-2021 Winter Response focused on

temporarily housing individuals with high acuity who historically would not seek traditional shelter. It also provided centrally located day space for individuals to take shelter indoors to get warm, provided meals and basic needs while maintaining safe social distancing and making available necessary masking and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) resources.

With a significant and continued increase in individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, the 2021-2022 Winter Response had a strong housing focus component in addition to drop-in day and night resting spaces. The response provided transitional housing and introduced an Indigenous led, culturally supportive response. The 2021-2022 year also offered safe places for unsheltered individuals to go to get in out of the cold and be supported as the pandemic continued. Basic needs and hygiene services were also offered throughout the response as were Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) supplies and COVID testing.

The 2022-2023 Winter Response was a fully community led response as per the outcomes of discussions and demonstration in the summer of 2022, which led to the creation of the Immediate Action to Support the City's Most Marginalized Community Action and Accountability Table (Community Action & Accountability Table). To support the continued increase in both numbers and desperation of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and try to ensure prevent deaths on the street, the concentrated focus was an increase in basic needs provisions and drop-in spaces to bring the community in out of the cold during the coldest months. An overall collaborative approach to ensure unified support through the winter months was applied which provided several positive interactions and supports for those at greatest risk due to cold weather.

**2.2 2020-2021 Program Expectations and Outcomes:**

# of bed days available	7,006
# of bed days occupied	6,988
# of bed nights available	7,006
# of bed nights occupied	6,988
# of hours service bed facility	5,424
# of hours service non-bed facility	1,029
<b>Total 2020 - 2021 Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,687,592</b>

**2.3 2021-2022 Program Expectations and Outcomes:**

# of bed days available	13,166
# of bed days occupied	12,308
# of bed nights available	13,166
# of bed nights occupied	12,308
# of hours service bed facility	7,086
# of hours service non-bed facility	1,452
<b>Total 2021 - 2022 Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,320,000</b>

**2.4 2022-2023 Program Expectations and Outcomes:**

# of bed days available	7,674
# of bed days occupied	4,394
# of bed nights available	15,964
# of bed nights occupied	11,250
# of hours service bed facility	11,927.5
# of hours service non-bed facility	4,021
<b>Total 2022 - 2023 Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,907,107</b>

## **3.0 Financial Comparison**

### **3.1. 2020-2021 Finances**

The Winter Response Program was budgeted through Provincial Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) for \$2,009,812 and was scheduled to be in operation from December 1, 2020, until March 31, 2021. This included the purchase and retrofitting of several construction trailers to accommodate individual rooms for occupancy. Although portions of the program were extended for additional months, the actual spending for base programs came in under budget by 16% with a total cost of \$1,687,592. This response used a multi-site service delivery plan and incorporated the bringing onsite of things like showers, washrooms, and basic needs supplies.

### **3.2. 2021-2022 Finances**

The Winter Response Program scheduled to run December 1, 2021, until March 31, 2022, was budgeted through SSRF funding for \$1,722,069 and came in under budget by 23%, with total spending of \$1,320,000 for the scheduled period. Expenses included \$450,000 to support the day and overnight drop in spaces, \$500,000 to support the Fanshawe temporary transitional shelter response and \$370,000 to support Wiigiwaaminaan, an Indigenous-led response. The modified construction trailers were also used in 2021-22, thereby saving any major capital investments in space as well the use of a City facility.

### **3.3. 2022-2023 Finances**

The total amount of approved funding for Winter Response 2022-2023 was up to \$5,000,000 through allocated SSRF Phase 5 funding, Reaching Home COVID response funding, remaining provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding, and municipal funding from the Housing Stability Services base budget.

Unlike previous Winter Responses, the response led by the Community Action & Accountability Table included several programming plans with one- and two-year schedules from the onset. For example, Atlohsa's Wiigiwaaminaan was funded for two years, and Salvation Army Centre of Hope showers and women only shelter beds, London Cares Hub and additional outreach, training and resting spaces were funded for a year.

The portion of Winter Response scheduled to operate from December 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, was budgeted for \$2,209,000 and came in under budget by 13.6%, with total spending of \$1,907,107. The remaining \$2,791,000 allocated funding is being spent to support programs noted above to Dec 1, 2023 and Atlohsa's Wiigiwaaminaan site to Dec 1, 2024.

Underspent dollars were reallocated under the recommendation of the Community Action & Accountability Table and approved by Council on April 25, 2023 to extend select community services for an additional 3 months. A final 2023-24 winter response report back is expected to be brought to committee in early 2024 after all reporting from participating agencies is received.

## **Conclusion**

Although all Winter Responses had the common goal of supporting unsheltered individuals with emergency life saving measures by offering options of getting in out of the cold, each year contained unique focuses. The scaling up of a Winter Response originated as a life saving measure in 2020 out of sheer necessity to support the individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness during COVID-19 when there were new measures and requirements incorporated through provincial and local public health bodies. The pandemic negatively impacted the safety of London's most vulnerable as congregate living settings were challenging when it came to physical distancing and outbreak containment. Additionally, many services and spaces that vulnerable Londoners relied on became closed or modified service delivery was introduced as everyone attempted to navigate the pandemic.

The 2021-22 Winter Response continued as London saw a devastating increase in homelessness and covid restrictions that limited any indoor public access to the most marginalized. During the pandemic, the city of London as a community continued to simultaneously experience an increase in housing challenges, addictions poisoning and mental health challenges that all contributed in various way to exacerbate the ongoing crises.

In planning for the winter response 2022-23, the number individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and their level of desperation had reached an untenable state. Homelessness numbers had unpredictably more than doubled since the first winter response. The need to provide individuals with options to get in out of the cold, support basic needs and a more holistic support model was identified by the table as paramount to the response. The Community Action & Accountability Table collaborated on a commitment to offer flexible service models that supported the maximum number of individuals experiencing homelessness to get in out of the cold until the whole of community system response was able to hold summits and establish the response framework that was recently approved by council.

The work of the Whole of Community System Response through the creation of 24/7 Hubs in 2023 will reduce and eventually eliminate the need to create one-off temporary measures, however as this work happens, the Encampment Implementation Table continues to prepare a plan for a 2023-24 Cold Weather Response that is expected to come forward to the September Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee.

<b>Prepared by:</b>	<b>Debbie Kramers, Manager, Coordinated Informed Response</b>
<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>Craig Cooper, Director, Housing Stability Services</b>
<b>Recommended by:</b>	<b>Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development</b>

**APPENDIX A:**

**Winter Response Year-Over-Year Comparison**

On June 27, 2023, Municipal Council directed Civic Administration to provide a year-over-year comparison for the past three years (2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023) on the number of bed days available/occupied, number of bed nights available/occupied, the number of hours service bed facility, the number of hours-of-service non-bed facility, and total expenses for the Winter Response Program.

It should be noted that the results below represent the months of December, January, February, and March for each year. However, the start and end dates for each service varied within those months. Further, the bed days and bed nights were based on a book in model and the beds were occupied for the entire time. Further, many bed nights were in spaces that had 24-hour bed access. This means that while these spaces were counted as bed night spaces, they also offered day spaces and are not included in the number of bed days available.

	<b>2020 - 2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>
# of bed days available	7006	13166	7674
# of bed days occupied	6988	12308	4394
# of bed nights available	7006	13166	15964
# of bed nights occupied	6988	12308	11250
# of hours service bed facility	5424	7086	11928
# of hours service non-bed facility	1029	1452	4021
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$1,687,592</b>	<b>\$1,320,000</b>	<b>\$1,907,107</b>