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Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members, Community and Protective Services Committee Meeting
From: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development
Subject: Revised - The City of London 2021-22 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (SS21-40, SS21-41, SS21-42, SS21-43)
Date: November 02, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager Social and Health Development, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with respect to The City of London 2021-22 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals to;

- a) **ENDORSE** the proposed report dated November 02, 2021, titled, “The City of London 2021-2022 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals”,
- b) **APPROVE** a funding increase extension to the existing Municipal Purchase of Service agreements at a total estimated increase of \$1,685,000.00 (excluding HST) for the period of December 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, to administer the City of London 2021-2022 Winter Response Program, as per the Corporation of the City of London Procurement Policy Section 20.3.a.ii; to the following existing agreements:
 - Ark Aid Street Mission,
 - CMHA Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services,
 - Impact London and
 - Atlohosa Family Healing Services.
- c) that Civic Administration **BE AUTHORIZED** to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary in connection with the contracts noted in b); and,
- d) that the approval given herein **BE CONDITIONAL** upon the Corporation of the City of London entering into and/or amending Purchase of Service Agreements with Agencies outlined in the attached as Schedule 1 of this report.

Executive Summary

Housing stability services is seeking single source approval to implement a temporary winter response program to provide lifesaving measures for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness this winter who cannot access existing emergency shelters, resting spaces or other temporary shelter support services.

As a result of COVID-19, existing programs are operating at capacity and services are unable to expand to meet the anticipated demand during the winter months. This is compounded by the fact that during the pandemic there has been an increase in unsheltered homelessness, the number of individuals experiencing severe and complex mental health needs, and the number of substance-related overdoses. COVID-19 has also resulted in a reduction of services and community supports and services available to meet the needs of unsheltered Londoners. During the warmer months there has also been an increase in people residing in small encampments throughout more isolated areas of the community.

The proposed winter response program will allow City teams to work collaboratively with community partners and direct service providing organizations to create new temporary community spaces for the winter months through a three-pronged approach. The recommendation for this type of approach is to align the variety of needs with a variety of interventions.

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The three-pronged approach will consist of the following:

1. **Drop-in Space:** both day and night stays ranging 0-8 hours
2. **Stabilization Space:** for stays ranging 24-72 hours
3. **Winter Shelter:** for stays ranging up to 4 months

This approach allows a tailored response for services to address the varying needs of vulnerable unsheltered Londoners.

Homeless Individual and Family Information System “HIFIS” data and outreach observations across the past six months of interactions indicate additional temporary resources are needed beyond the current temporary COVID related responses. Lessons learned from last year’s winter response program supports the need to decentralize some of these services and enhance housing-focused service delivery models. This multi-pronged approach is designed to meet the needs of those hardest to support experiencing unsheltered homelessness with no other options, giving them an opportunity to stabilize and focus on housing needs.

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

London’s Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019), is the approved guiding document for housing stability services and housing in the city of London and was developed in consultation with Londoners.

Providing the right level of support at the right time to decrease the use of emergency services and creating an outreach system and rapid response to support individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness are strategic areas of focus within the 2019 – 2024 Housing Stability Action Plan. London needs to increase system capacity and availability of services across sectors to meet the housing stability needs of individuals and families in crisis, including housing individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness over the winter months.

Core Area Action Plan

Establishing more daytime resting spaces and stabilization spaces are actions identified in the Core Area Action Plan. London needs to increase the number of spaces available during the winter months for individuals to rest and meet their basic needs such as food, water, change of clothing and bathrooms. Warm spaces are needed for individuals who sleep unsheltered to access breakfast essentials of daily living including food, drink, and social connectivity.

The City of London is committed to working in partnership with the community to identify solutions that will drive a strong, deep, and inclusive community recovery for London as we move out of and beyond the global COVID-19 pandemic. This report, and the items within, are linked to such initiatives as London Community Recovery Network (LCRN) and Back to Business (B2B). The Winter Response aims at supporting community recovery efforts by aligning with Council’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. This response specifically speaks to several areas of focus including - Strengthening Our Community, Safe City for Women and Girls, Leading in Public Service and Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

Winter Response Program

The winter response program being proposed is a result of planning that has taken place since the closure of last year’s winter response. The need for a winter response has been monitored and system service levels evaluated constantly over the summer months to best understand the current need in community. As a result of this monitoring, civic administration has identified that the need for additional temporary space has not reduced as anticipated and the demand for services since the spring of 2021 has only increased.

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As a result, the proposed winter response is being recommended by civic administration as a temporary measure to aid the community and service providers in their service delivery responsibilities.

The best practises and lessons learned from the previous winter response have been reviewed and incorporated into the proposed temporary response for winter 2021-22.

The ability to propose any type of Winter Response is a result of the Provincial and Federal governments providing additional temporary COVID related funding this fall. While Civic Administration had anticipated the potential to be directly involved in a Winter Response for a final time, it was not until an additional Provincial Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) allocation was finalized on Aug 16, 2021, and an additional Federal Reaching Home allocation was finalized on July 23, 2021, that finalization of plans could occur. Civic Administration has spent weeks working internally with several Service Areas and externally with service providers to formulate and finalize several details and specifics of the Winter Response. While the SSRF investment plan is currently with the Province for final approval Civic Administration does not foresee any delay in launching the winter response and anticipates receiving investment plan approval in the coming weeks.

As a result of COVID-19 and the increased need for service, several modified and temporary services have been introduced to best support existing programs in operating at capacity. Even with these temporary programs, it is evident that some services are unable to expand capacity to meet the expected demand during the winter months. As part of this report preparation, civic administration took into consideration the use of City owned property and under-used assets (seasonal) where possible. Ten existing City spaces were extensively considered, evaluated and internal discussions around opportunity were carried out for this year's response. However, most city owned buildings did not meet the immediate needs of the response. Reasons included capital upgrade requirements, location, existing programming that is operating in the space and environmental and safety design challenges.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London

The City of London identifies 'Strengthening Our Community' and 'Building a Sustainable City' as strategic areas of focus.

Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful.

Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city.

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.

Council and staff continue to recognize the importance of actions to support the Core Area, and in the development of its 2019-2023 - Strategic Plan for the City of London. Specifically, the efforts described in this report address the following Areas of Focus, including:

- Strengthening Our Community
- Building a Sustainable City
- Safe City for Women and Girls
- Leading in Public Service

Links to Community Recovery

The city of London is committed to working in partnership with the community to identify solutions that will drive a strong, deep and inclusive community recovery for London as

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we move out of and beyond the global COVID-19 pandemic. This report, and the items within, are linked to supporting Londoners experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic to attain and retain permanent housing. This work supports recovery efforts through a coordinated COVID-19 Response that will support the transition of homeless individuals and families with life saving measures and to support individuals to secure permanent housing.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response (SSRF Phase 3) – Single Source Procurement - #SS21-29 (June 22, 2021)
- City of London Additional Short-Term Supports for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: June 1, 2021)
- Update – City of London 2020-21 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: April 20, 2021)
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response Extension, April to June, 2021 (CPSC: March 30, 2021)
- Sole Source Award for the Implementation of The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan (CPSC March 2, 2021)
- City of London 2020-2021 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: December 1, 2020)
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response and Funding Overview (CPSC: April 28, 2020)
- Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding Agreement (CPSC: April 28, 2020)
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response (CPSC: October 6, 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 Purpose

Housing Stability Services is coordinating a temporary winter response that will support the provision of life saving measures for unsheltered individuals and families over the coming winter months.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in existing homeless responses operating at or near capacity. As a result, a three-pronged approach of temporary supports is being proposed to help temporarily address the varying needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

The City of London has been allocated provincial and federal funding specifically for COVID related supports through the Federal Reaching Home program and Provincial Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF). This funding is intended to support vulnerable individuals and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Single source approval is being sought for the winter program response, including for the use of multiple locations for temporary shelter and staffing support, for the period of December 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022.

2.2 Background

City of London, Housing Stability Services Winter Response

The city of London housing stability services team is working with community collaborators to provide temporary life saving day/overnight space, shelter space and stabilization space during the winter months.

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London currently funds approximately 300 beds within its existing emergency shelter system. These services are provided by Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Men's Mission including Rotholme Family Shelter, Centre of Hope and Unity Project. These spaces are consistently at or near capacity. The city also currently funds 40 resting space beds operated by London Cares, Atlohsa Family Healing Services and My Sisters Place through the Canadian Mental Health Association, which are also consistently at or near capacity.

There are currently approximately 120 unique individuals living unsheltered who do not access traditional shelter services. The winter response is proposing 60 additional overnight spaces, 40 additional resting spaces and up to 10 stabilization beds.

Community driven prioritization criteria that have been established will influence the access to these services through the City of London Coordinated Access program for winter response. The temporary response aims to support individuals in crisis, meet an individual's basic needs, increase connectivity so primary social services and to provide a solution to assist our most vulnerable Londoners to get out of the cold. Significant background planning has taken place including internally across many service areas of the corporation and with several community organizations and professionals that serve vulnerable individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Initial planning for the winter response began shortly after the prior year's debrief and review of program success. Throughout the summer months additional lessons were learned through data tracking, outreach experiences, input from services providers, and through pre-existing projects such as the Emergency Shelter competitive bid consultations.

In August 2021, Civic Administration learned of new COVID related funding allocations through the Provincial SSRF program which provided a possibility for this type of intervention this winter. While these funds needed to be considered for a wide range of services including in Middlesex County, the announced funding meant Civic Administration could begin to formalize planning discussions. An investment plan outlining SSRF expenditures was submitted to the Province on September 24, 2021, which included expenditures for the Winter Response. While that investment plan has not been returned with approvals, Civic Administration does not expect that delay will jeopardize the delivery of this plan, while acknowledging it is best to move forward and act quickly.

In addition to the SSRF allocation, Civic Administration also learned of a new COVID related funding allocation for the Federal Reaching Home program. A portion of this funding is being earmarked for the winter response. The details related to the remaining funding will be brought for council approval where required later this year once additional project details can be finalized and endorsed by the Reaching Home community advisory board.

The Housing Stability Services team has maintained close contact with the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) to seek public health guidance about reducing the spread of COVID-19 in homeless serving settings. Civic administration will maintain both provincial and local COVID-19 guidelines with resources and guidance provided by MLHU. This includes the preparation of a detailed outbreak management plan for all aspects of the winter response. All winter response spaces will follow existing community policies, procedures, and resources in the event a participant should have a positive COVID screening. Current isolation and monitoring resources will be utilized to support the individual for testing, education, and vaccination as appropriate.

The Housing Stability Services team has consulted with the city's risk management department related to liability, risk, and insurance. Feedback received included recommendations related to the use of current contracting protocols and processes for existing agreements. These agreements include provisions related to safety, indemnification, and compliance.

Drop-in Space: Daytime

- Location: Centre Branch YMCA (382 Waterloo Street)

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Civic Administration through consultation with community partners are proposing as part of a three-pronged approach a very critical day drop-in space response for a specific portion of the unsheltered homeless population. Having safe and warm space to access during the day with supports available is a key intervention and addresses a gap in the service system that often results in higher volume of individuals seeking refuge in outdoor spaces such as alleys and covered doorways.

In this regard, 48 drop-in day spaces are being recommended and will be focused on providing a warm space for individuals to get out of the cold, access basic needs and build a sense of community in a socially distanced environment. Housing focused supports and professional health services will be on site to engage with participants on a daily basis.

This centralized location will be staffed by Ark Aid Street Mission staff and volunteers. .

Drop-in Space: Overnight:

- Location: TBD

Civic Administration through consultation with community partners are proposing as part of a three-pronged approach a very critical overnight drop-in space response for a specific portion of the unsheltered homeless population. Having safe and warm space to access during the night with supports available is a key intervention and addresses a gap in the service system that often results in higher volume of individuals seeking refuge in outdoor spaces such as alleys and covered doorways.

In this regard, 40 Drop-in overnight spaces are being recommended and will become operational throughout December and reach full capacity in early January. This space will become operational throughout December and reach full capacity in early January. The space will focus on providing a safe, warm environment for individuals to receive rest and be out of the cold.

This response will be staffed by Ark Aid Street Mission staff and volunteers and offered in close proximity to the daytime drop-in space.

NOTE: As part of the CPSC Nov 2 report released to committee on Oct 27, 2021, it was identified that the overnight spaces would operate out of the Centre Branch YMCA. This is not correct.

City staff reported in error that this had been secured as the location for overnight drop-in space. Staff remain committed to securing an overnight resting space and hope to be able to confirm a location soon.

The YMCA has been an important partner in supporting London's vulnerable population throughout the pandemic. In no way is this an indication of a change in the YMCA's desire to help London's unsheltered homeless population; nor is it a result of a change in any decisions or business practise needs of the YMCA.

Stabilization Space

- Location: CMHA Coffee House (371 Hamilton Road)

Civic Administration has sought in the past to provide a stabilization space in the community for individuals in need of acute mental health and addiction support. Though the ability to operate this type of intervention on a permanent basis is not yet achieved, there does exist an opportunity for a temporary service to serve a specific population through a unique partnership with community providers.

Up to 10 stabilization beds are being proposed to operate 24/7 to support unsheltered individuals experiencing in the moment crisis. In collaboration with social, addiction, medical and mental health service providers, the site will provide crash style beds with direct referrals only made through COAST, LPS and CIR. A Canadian Mental Health

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Association Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services owned building with controlled entry will provide private space for stabilization and recovery, support engagement and clinical work with individuals.

Individuals being referred to this space will stay for a period of 24 to 72 hours and will receive direct professional care while onsite. This space is not identified as a drop-in style space, nor will there be daytime programming being provided for general visitors.

Winter Emergency Shelters

Civic administration through the constant review of system capacity and current demands for service are proposing additional temporary emergency shelter beds. The need for those living unsheltered who are working towards their housing goals is the priority of this response. As part of the lessons learned from last year's response, the decision was made to move these temporary responses out of the core and to the fringe of the city. As part of last year's response, the best results were achieved by those individuals who were able to achieve more privacy and, in a community, focussed response. This provided the opportunity for a number of individuals to stabilize and secure housing once the program ended.

60 emergency shelter spaces are proposed to be provided between two locations 24/7. In collaboration with social service providers, the site will utilize heated portable residential trailers owned by the city of London parked on hard surfaces adjacent to city owned communal space for the provision of this service. On site services include dining, washroom and hygiene facilities, support staff workspaces and programming space to provide housing focussed supports to the individuals. These low barrier units are for individuals who are sleeping unsheltered to allow for rest, stability and, access to basic needs and housing focussed supports. Security will support each location 24/7.

All services required for the individuals on site will be brought into the space as required and any individual needs for off-site services will be accommodated by ensuring transportation to those services and back to the space are facilitated by on site staff.

The need for an indigenous led response supports councils' direction to implement the Giwetashkad plan and having the winter response led by an indigenous service agency allows for a more considerate response for those who identify as indigenous and who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Every effort is being made to bring services from a variety of care providers to these sites.

- Location: River Road Golf Course (2115 River Road)

The river road location was chosen as it is currently an underutilized municipal property and provides the amenities to support the program needs. After considering a number of City owned locations and carefully taking into account the successes of the Elizabeth Street site from last year's response, the river road location is being recommended for use for this year's winter response. The site will operate from December 1, 2021, until March 31, 2022, and will provide indigenous led supports and services to assist through the transition from street to shelter. The indigenous led response may be supported at times by a multitude of service providers depending on the service and care being provided. This temporary response will provide a specific service offering for participants who self-identify as being indigenous to reconnect with land, culture, and home. The river road property provides privacy while being accessible to community supports and transit.

City of London Realty Services has initiated the disposition process for this asset in compliance with the Municipal Council's Sale and Other Disposition of Land Policy and will be reporting to Municipal Council later in 2021. All temporary uses will align with Council approved timelines and plans to achieve highest and best use for the property.

- Location: Fanshawe Golf Course (2835 Sunningdale Road)

The Fanshawe site is being recommended as a short-term temporary location for very specific housing focused supports as it is an underutilized site during the winter months.

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The primary objective of this location will be a focus on housing and housing readiness. The location, although remote, provides the necessary space out of the core to allow those staying there to be supported through their housing stability journey. Services such as the H.O.M.E bus as well as other primary health and mental health and housing supports will come to this location to support residents of the site. The intent of the site is to move people from the streets to housing as quickly as possible. Those chosen for this site are going to be individuals who are already moving towards housing. The location will operate from December 1, 2021, until March 1, 2022, and provide supports and services for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are already engaging with supports and actively working toward their housing goals. The site is intended to support individuals who self-sustain due to not being successful in the traditional shelter system.

2.3 Procurement Process

Procurement for the Winter Response will be supported through single source contracts per the Procurement of Goods and Services Policy Section 14.4;

d)

“There is a need for compatibility with goods and/or services previously acquired or the required goods and/or services will be additional to similar goods and/or services being supplied under an existing contract (i.e. Contract extension or renewal).”

and e)

“The required goods and or services are to be supplied by a particular supplier having special knowledge, skills, or experience.”

The Winter Response will continue to leverage existing purchase agreements with service providers, seek volunteers, and benefit from donations coordinated by community organizations.

If approved, civic administration will move quickly to finalize all agreements and procurements to support vulnerable unsheltered Londoners.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

3.1 Funding

This temporary program will be fully funded through the Government of Canada COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding Agreement and Government of Ontario Social Services Relief Fund.

The program allocations up to a total \$1,950,000.00 outlined in the attached as Schedule 1 of this report, that will include using approved funding to amend current existing Purchase of Service agreements up to a total of \$1,685,000.00 (plus HST) to support the operations of the winter response. Additionally, \$270,000 is being identified to support 24/7 security at City owned sites and to support minor renovations and retrofits to the current trailers before being used for the winter response program.

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Submitted by:	Craig Cooper, Director, Housing Stability Services, Social and Health Development
Recommended by:	Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development

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Schedule 1

**Housing Stability Services
2021-22 Winter Response Allocations**

Program/Service	Agency	Cost Estimate	Time-period & Description
Day/Night resting spaces	Ark Aid Street Mission (SS21-40)	\$400,000	Services to provide basic needs and operational requirements to continue to support vulnerable individuals and families receiving temporary emergency shelter at core area location for the period of December 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. Includes cleaning & transportation, damages, food, contingency, etc.
Stabilization Spaces	CMHA (SS21-41)	\$360,000	Services to provide basic needs and operational requirements to continue to support vulnerable individuals experiencing in the moment crisis' at CMHA location for the period of December 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. Includes cleaning & transportation, damages, security, contingency, etc.
River Road Winter Shelter Space	Atlohsa Family Healing Service (SS21-43)	\$460,000	Services to provide basic needs and operational requirements to continue to support vulnerable individuals and families receiving temporary emergency shelter at a city owned location for the period of December 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. Includes cleaning & transportation, damages, food, contingency, etc.
Fanshawe Winter Shelter Space	Impact London (SS21-42)	\$460,000	Services to provide basic needs and operational requirements to continue to support vulnerable individuals and families receiving temporary emergency shelter at a city owned location for the period of December 1, 2021, to March 1, 2022. Includes cleaning & transportation, damages, food, contingency, etc.
City Security for City properties	Corporate Security	\$180,000	Provision of 24/7 security for the River road and Fanshawe locations
Renovation for existing trailers	City of London Facilities	\$90,000	Renovations of existing trailers to meet current program needs for service at both city owned locations.
Total		\$1,950,000	100% Funded through Federal COVID related Reaching Home Program.