

To: Warden and Members of County Council
From: Director of Human Services

24/7 Emergency Shelter Update

RECOMMENDATION

1. That County Council receive Report No. HS 2023-07, entitled “24/7 Emergency Shelter Update” as information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of achieving 24/7 emergency shelter services as directed by resolution at the January 26, 2022 County Council meeting.
- The creation of 24/7 emergency shelter services was in place by October 2022.
- The County provided \$518,172 to the creation of a 24-hour, 7 days a week, emergency shelter.







Financial Impact

There is no impact to the 2023 budget as funding provided to support the ongoing operations of the 24/7 shelter is 100% Provincial funding.

Communications

County staff regularly engages with community partners who provide front line supports and services to individuals experiencing homelessness in our communities. County staff communicate with and support individuals experiencing homelessness through our offices.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
1.i. 1.ii.		3.i. 3.iii.		4.i.	

DISCUSSION

Background

The COVID-19 Pandemic had significant impacts on our communities' most vulnerable citizens when businesses and agencies closed down and access to vital supports were not easily accessible. Individuals experiencing homelessness and those precariously housed frequently gathered in the downtown core during pandemic lockdowns. The pandemic was not only life altering to those experiencing homelessness, but it was also a challenge to retailers trying to sustain their businesses despite the pandemic. More importantly, those experiencing homelessness experienced challenges in accessing much needed supports and basic needs such as shelter, food, interactions with peers and support workers.

On November 24, 2021, County Council passed a resolution directing staff to report back on the cost, funding and length of time needed to begin a 24-hour, 7 days a week, shelter with sufficient space for the various agencies providing services to people experiencing homelessness, addictions and mental health issues. Council also directed staff to report back on the ability to increase Peer Street Outreach services for downtown Woodstock for a minimum of 6 days per week, in order to provide downtown businesses and patrons with an alternative response service to Woodstock Police for incidents not requiring police intervention.

On January 26, 2022, staff presented options for the establishment of a 24-hour, 7 days a week, shelter to County Council. At the same meeting a resolution was passed under [HS 2022-01](#) to expand the current location at 723 Dundas Street in Woodstock for the overnight shelter ("The Inn") from 12 beds to 25 beds. A potential alternate site was also identified for the operation of services during the day time for individuals experiencing homelessness. Staff proceeded to work with Operation Sharing and Old Saint Paul's Church to increase the hours of operation working towards a 24-hour, 7 days a week, shelter.

In addition, a Peer Outreach team was created under the umbrella of the Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley (CMHATV) and Mental Health Services using funds through the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF), to provide downtown businesses and patrons with an alternative response service. It should be noted that the SSRF was a temporary funding program that was provided by the Province from March 2020 through December 2022 for the purpose of supporting the communities most vulnerable, including people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless as a result of COVID-19. This funding was intended to mitigate the ongoing risks for vulnerable people through the term of the pandemic and will not be provided on an ongoing basis.

At County Council's meeting held March 8, 2023, Council passed a resolution directing staff to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the County and Operations Sharing for the purpose of identifying operational and capital funding and explore potential permanent locations for the services of a 24-hour, 7 days a week, emergency shelter. Work on this direction is ongoing and a report will come back to County Council at a future meeting.

Comments

24/7 Emergency Shelter

Implementation of a 24-hour, 7 days a week, shelter was phased in over several months throughout 2022. An increase in beds at the overnight shelter rolled out in January 2022, a day space was created at College Avenue United Church opening on April 4, 2022 operating Monday through Friday and the opening of the day space Saturdays and Sundays at CMHA on Peel Street began on October 15, 2022.

Table 1: 24/7 Emergency Shelter Locations and Hours of Operation

Location	Hours of Operation
Old St. Pauls Church (The Inn)	7 days a week 4:00pm to 8:00am
College Avenue Church	Monday through Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm
CMHA Office	Saturday and Sunday 8:00am to 4:00pm

Throughout the implementation process, County staff supported Operation Sharing in building the emergency shelter system. Recruitment of qualified staff was reported by Operation Sharing as a challenge.

The increase in beds and staffing at the overnight shelter was made possible through financial investment from the County of \$100,000 through SSRF, an increase in Community Homelessness Prevention Funding (CHPI) of \$95,000 and a contribution from the Affordable Housing Reserves of \$180,000. Additional funds were provided to Operation Sharing through additional SSRF funding that was made available by the province in the latter part of 2022.

Table 2: Funding provide for the 24/7 Emergency Shelter

Funding Program	Funding Provided
CHPI (now HPP)	\$186,172
SSRF	135,000
Affordable Housing Reserves	180,000
TOTAL	\$501,172

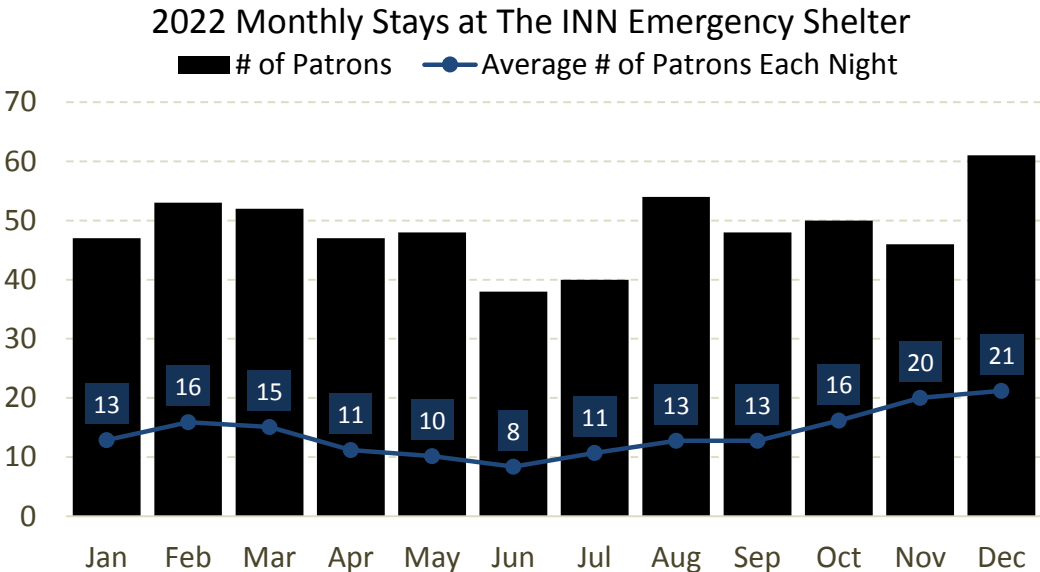
In addition Operation Sharing was provided with additional funding of \$97,500 under the last Phase of SSRF to support other areas of Operation Sharing for staffing of Bullwinkles and the Food for Friends Program.

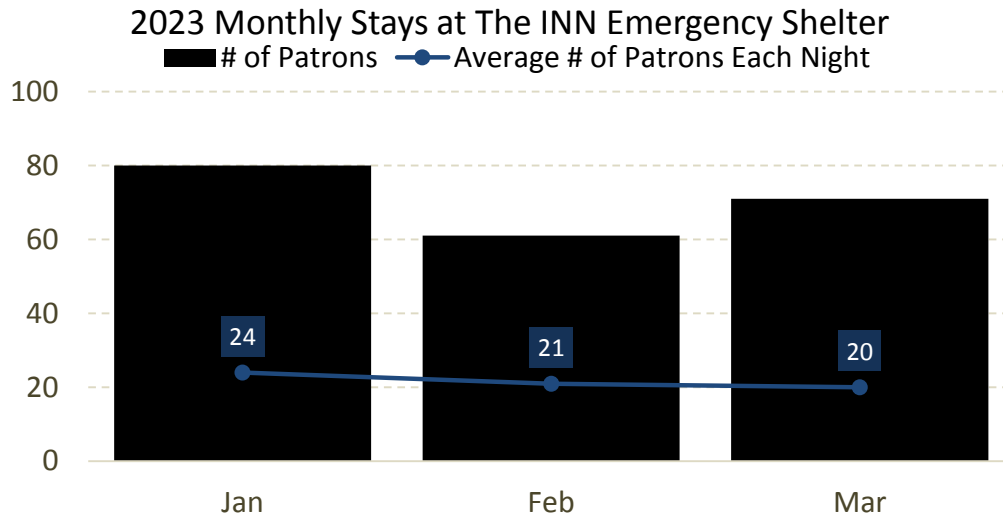
Additional Supports for those Experiencing Homelessness

For Council’s information, as indicated in Report [HS 2021-14](#), the County receives annualized funding through the Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) formerly CHPI to provide a myriad of housing services across the continuum. In addition to financial support for Operation Sharing to operate The Inn overnight shelter, the County through HPP provides funding for emergency housing to the Salvation Army Woodstock, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll locations. At present, funding is used in an effort to provide necessary hotel supports to those in need. In 2022 approximately \$180,000 was allocated for these purposes. The County also continues to work with clients to avoid homelessness and in 2022 approximately \$400,000 was spent to support households in preventing homelessness primarily for rent arrears, utility arrears and last months rent deposit.

Outcomes

The following graphs illustrate the usage of the overnight shelter for 2022 and 2023 for the first 3 months of the year.





The data shows the usage of the overnight shelter tends to be higher in the colder months, and increases during the latter half of the month. The majority of the patrons approximately 66% are between 30-50 years of age. The majority of patrons approximately 75% indicate they are from Woodstock.

The Day Space located at College Avenue Church Monday to Friday and at CMHA office Saturday and Sunday currently sees approximately 42-47 patrons daily accessing the space. Community Partners including CMHATV, Oxford County Community Health Centre and the County Human Services attend the day space to provide supports and services to patrons.

Conclusions

The establishment of a 24-hour, 7 days a week, emergency shelter has had a positive impact on those experiencing homelessness, our community partners and our communities as a whole. The existence of strong partnerships and willing partners has been critical to this successful initiative. Operation Sharing has been a strong advocate and leader in this space in the implementation of a 24-hour, 7 days a week, emergency shelter.

County staff continue to collaborate with Operation Sharing on a Memorandum of Understanding that will set out a sustainable path forward for these critical services.

SIGNATURES

Departmental Approval:

Original signed by

Kelly Black
Director of Human Services

Approved for submission:

Original signed by

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 – Resolution No. 12, November 24, 2021