

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent
Community Human Services
Employment and Social Services
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Chantal Perry
Program Manager
Employment and Social Services

Date: December 3, 2018

Subject: 2018 Registry Week Enumeration Final Report

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

As part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, Realizing Our Potential (2014-2019), the Province established a long-term goal to end homelessness by 2025. The *Housing Services Act, 2011* was amended to require that Service Managers conduct an enumeration of the homeless population within their jurisdiction during the months of March, April or May of 2018. Enumeration activities were mandated to be held every two years thereafter.

Homeless enumeration is the measurement of the number of people experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time. The objectives of local homeless enumeration are:

- To provide a snapshot of homelessness, including information on the scope and nature of homelessness in communities across Ontario.
- To provide a mechanism for tracking progress and trends, including:
 - Establishing a baseline sample that can be used to track progress in reducing homelessness and chronic homelessness over time.
 - Enabling provincial reporting on the problem of homelessness.
 - Providing data that Service Managers can use to monitor the impact of local strategies and initiatives.
- To provide information to drive change, spur innovation and enable continuous improvement. Data gathered through enumeration can provide information about whether programs and initiatives are having the desired impact on homelessness.

In October 2017, an Enumeration Planning Committee was established, comprised of Public Health, Housing Services, and Local Health Integrated Network staff, led by Employment & Social Services.

At the February 12, 2018, Council meeting, Council approved the participation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent in the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness 20,000 Homes Campaign. The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a national movement of communities working together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 2020. As a participating 20,000 Homes Campaign community, Chatham-Kent hosted a Registry Week from April 9, 2018 to April 14, 2018, to fulfill its' enumeration mandate. During this week, 80 trained volunteers and agency personnel pre-screened people for homelessness at thirty-six access points throughout Chatham-Kent. If participants were assessed as being homeless or at-risk of homelessness, a mandated provincial Ontario Enumeration survey, as well as an optional short housing and health integrated survey, was administered.

A [brief preliminary report](#) of the 2018 Registry Week enumeration was presented to Council on June 11, 2018 with a commitment to provide a more fulsome analytic report, including recommendations, in the fall of 2018.

Comments

The report titled *I Am Homeless, Not Nameless: Chatham-Kent 2018 Registry Week*, provides an in-depth analysis and review of the data gathered during the Municipality of Chatham-Kent's enumeration effort. 258 individuals completed the homelessness pre-screening survey. 70 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness or being at risk of homelessness. 47 individuals voluntarily completed the Housing and Health Integrated Survey and were prioritized for follow-up service support interventions and inclusion on a "By-Name List". A By-Name list is a real-time list of all people experiencing homelessness locally, and informs inflow into the homelessness system (the number of people becoming homeless each month) and outflow from the homelessness system (the number of people obtaining permanent housing or otherwise leaving the system each month).

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of homeless respondents in Chatham-Kent were between the ages of 26-64 years, with an average age of 38 years old. Males were almost twice as likely to be experiencing homelessness as their female counterparts (56% vs 34%). The experience of homelessness, however, is different based on gender. Males reported being homeless longer and more frequently than females. Additionally, mental health and addiction were the highest reported health concerns for males while mental and chronic physical health conditions were the highest reported health concerns among females. Indigenous people were over-represented, with 20% of respondents identifying as Aboriginal or as having Aboriginal ancestry. Previous child welfare involvement was also over-represented, with 26% of respondents reporting having been in foster care and/or a group home at some time in their life.

Family breakdown (31%) was reported as the leading cause of homelessness among respondents, followed by unsafe housing conditions (21%), conflict with non-family (13%), health issues (13%), financial issues (11%) and incarceration (10%). Although decreasing vacancy rates, rising housing costs and stagnate wages make financial issues an obvious reason for homelessness, the high rates of family breakdown and conflict indicate a need for further investigation into homeless prevention interventions that strengthen conflict resolution, resiliency, and interpersonal skills.

Recognizing that the experience of homelessness is unique in rural and northern communities, Registry Week data provided strong evidence of the prevalence of hidden homelessness with 27 respondents (40%) identifying that they relied on temporary housing situations such as staying with friends or couch surfing. An additional 33 people (49%) relied on emergency housing in community funded motel stays or domestic violence shelters. Seven percent (7%), or 5 people, identified staying in an unsheltered location (outside, in a vehicle, in a tent or makeshift shelter). The fact that eighty-seven percent (87%) of people had some type of shelter, compared with seven percent (7%) unsheltered, indicates that Chatham-Kent's adoption of a Housing First philosophy in service programming may be having a positive effect. The focus on rapid rehousing and permanent housing leads to faster transitional housing arrangements and fewer people living unsheltered.

On average, people had experienced 184 days of homelessness over the past year, however there were large variations in the length of time individuals were homeless. 13 respondents reported having experienced less than 1 month of homelessness, while 18 people reported being homeless for 12 months in the past year. It is also important to acknowledge that 31 individuals (44%) identified as experiencing chronic homelessness with six or more months of homelessness in the past year and 18 (26%) individuals met the federal definition of episodic homelessness since they experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness in the past year. 35 people, 50% of all respondents, reported being homeless on only one occasion. Research demonstrates that the longer a household experiences homelessness, the greater the likelihood of increased depth of need, increased trauma and the requirement for intensive supports to return to a state of housing stability. In other words, the longer someone is homeless, the costlier it is to re-house them.

Respondents experiencing homelessness in Chatham-Kent also reported having significant health issues. Over forty percent (40%) indicated that they have a chronic physical health issue. Twenty-nine percent (29%) indicated they have an acute medical disability, forty-three percent (43%) indicated substance abuse issues, and fifty-three percent (53%) indicated mental health issues. Additionally, a contradiction exists when considering emergency and health care service use. While the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness do not seek help when they are ill, a small number of individuals reported very high levels of emergency care service use, including 31 visits to the Emergency Room, 13 hospitalizations, and 97 interactions with police in that last six months. The high emergency service usage by a small number of homeless individuals demonstrates the high financial burden of homelessness when emergency

services are used to manage homelessness. It is vital to focus on returning people to secure and safe housing as soon as possible, to prevent further incidents of trauma and abuse, the exacerbation of health issues and continued high cost emergency service intervention and usage.

The report titled *I Am Homeless, Not Nameless: Chatham-Kent 2018 Registry Week Report* outlines the following recommendations for homeless prevention system improvement and future enumeration efforts:

Recommendations for Homeless Prevention System Improvement

1. Continue alignment of services and programming with provincial priority populations, specifically, those experiencing chronic, youth, and/or Indigenous homelessness
2. Increase rapid re-housing and supportive housing services and programming, based on acuity, for priority homeless populations (chronic, youth, and/or Indigenous)
3. Increase coordination with public institutions
4. Strengthen capacity to address family breakdown as a means of preventing homelessness
5. Improve capacity to address unsafe housing conditions as a means of preventing homelessness
6. Increase system-level capacity to respond to the vast scope of experiences of homelessness in Chatham-Kent
7. Continue evidence-informed decision making and planning

Recommendations for 2020 Enumeration

1. Further develop and enhance volunteer recruitment and training process
2. Increase involvement of individuals with lived experience of homelessness in enumeration planning and implementation activities
3. Establish and maintain better communication, linkages and mutually beneficial collaboration with local Indigenous communities to improve partnership opportunities for Indigenous-led enumeration activities in 2020
4. Continue to encourage and strengthen community relationships including non-profit, for-profit, and public sectors

When cross referenced with the Chatham-Kent Coordinated Entry and Access database, 65% of homeless respondents had accessed community-based housing stability services in the past year, while 35% were unconnected to services. This indicates, that although current homelessness and housing stability services are having an impact, increased efforts and focus must be placed on increasing outreach-based services and supports. Services and supports were offered to all 47 respondents that completed the Housing and Health Integrated Survey (and are known “By-Name” and included on the current Chatham-Kent By-Name Prioritization List). 58% (27 people) are now living in stable housing, 21% are transitionally housed (10 people), 13% (6 people) are inactive/unable to be located, 6% (3 people) are incarcerated and 2% (1 person)

remain homeless. Services and supports will continue to be offered to all known homeless individuals on the Chatham-Kent By-Name Prioritization list.

Given the limitations of any isolated time-limited investigation into the prevalence and nature of homelessness in an area, 70 households should be considered the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness and/or at imminent risk of homelessness in Chatham-Kent at any given time. It should also be noted that without existing programs, the number of people identified as homeless through our 2018 Registry Week efforts would be much higher. Additionally, it must be emphasized that continued progress in housing stability, and reductions in homelessness, cannot be achieved or maintained without the continuation, and expansion of federal, provincial and municipal funding support initiatives. Although there have been great strides made in establishing and implementing effective programs throughout the last four years, it is clear that there is more progress to be made. Based on the Registry Week data, continued targeted program development, in combination with already established prioritization and acuity methodologies will be essential in reaching the goal of ending homelessness. Progressive engagement, housing focused outreach and sheltering, as well as continued reductions within the By-Name Prioritization List, will provide the primary opportunities to prevent and end homelessness in Chatham-Kent over the next five years.

Consultation

Consultation was held with the Enumeration Report Sub-Committee, chaired by the Program Manager, Employment and Social Services.

Financial Implications

The Chatham-Kent Enumeration Plan is 100% provincially-funded from the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative program, as per direction from the Ministry of Housing. There is no financial implication to the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

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Attachment:

I Am Homeless, Not Nameless: 2018 Chatham-Kent Registry Week Report

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