



## **Advisory Committee Meeting – March 28, 2022**

## **Council-In-Committee Meeting – April 12, 2022**

Subject: 2021 Homelessness Enumeration Results  
Report Number: HSS-22-04  
Division: Health and Social Services  
Department: Haldimand Norfolk Social Services and Housing  
Purpose: For Decision

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### **Recommendation(s):**

THAT Staff report HSS 22-04 2021 Homelessness Enumeration Results be received as information.

### **Executive Summary:**

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) directed in 2018 that all Consolidated Municipal Services Managers undertake a homelessness enumeration in their service area, to be completed bi-annually.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of our second local Homelessness Enumeration in Haldimand and Norfolk which took place on November 17 and 18, 2021.

### **Discussion:**

In 2021, MMAH directed that the method used for enumeration be a Point-in-Time Count (PiT). This resulted in the second enumeration for Haldimand and Norfolk Counties over the two days of November 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The goal of a homelessness enumeration is to provide data points that MMAH uses to evaluate effectiveness of current Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding, plan for future funding and programs, and measure and report on progress in efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

Successful planning and implementation of a homelessness enumeration is led by 6 guiding principles and targeted to include individuals experiencing 3 types of homelessness including the unsheltered, emergency sheltered, and provisionally accommodated. Data was revised for any duplication prior to reporting to MMAH, ensuring individuals were only counted once.

## **Enumeration – Methodology and Staff & Volunteer Participation**

The methodology required for enumeration in 2021 was a PiT count, as mandated by MMAH. A PiT count is meant to capture the number of people experiencing homelessness on one night (point) in time. For this purpose, the date chosen was November 17<sup>th</sup>. On the 17<sup>th</sup> Social Services and Housing staff and partner agency volunteers asked where a person would be sleeping that night, and on November 18<sup>th</sup>, asked where the person slept last night. The PiT Count included 5 screening questions that qualified participants as experiencing homelessness, or not, and if screened in included an additional 17 questions. It took approximately 7 minutes to complete for those who screened in and agreed to participate. All staff and volunteers completed a virtual training session to ensure all surveys were completed without bias in an ethically appropriate manner that met minimum service level standards.

Compared to the 2018 Enumeration, 2021 saw many changes to the approach, due to COVID-19 and the creation of the Homeless Prevention Services (HPS) Team, which did not exist during the 2018 enumeration. Some of these changes included:

1. Omitting the requirement of a Service Prioritization Determination and Assessment Tool (SPDAT) while surveying people in the community. The SPDAT is an assessment tool designed to measure acuity or “risk of homelessness”, and in 2018 was done in addition to the mandatory survey questions asked. The omission of this assessment for 2021 was done to reduce the exposure time for staff and participants face-to-face interactions in completing the survey. Instead, staff and volunteers gave participants the option to be contacted by the HPS team later to complete the SPDAT over the phone. This allowed the enumerators more time to contact more individuals, took less time for the participants in answering questions, and ensured staff still were able to contact people to complete the SPDAT questionnaire later to add them to our By-Name-List, also mandated by MMAH for implementation by January 1, 2022.
2. Reduced number of street teams. In 2018, 90 staff and volunteers were used in deploying 14 street teams, 16 hours/day over 4 days. In 2021, Social Services & Housing staff enumerated on the street and community partners focused their efforts on screening and surveying individuals who are already connected to their organization. This helped capture more of the “hidden homelessness” and reduced teams enumerating on the streets to 10 staff in groups of 2-3 covering various locations over 2 days throughout both Haldimand and Norfolk Counties.
3. More local agency partners. In 2018 we had the assistance of 10 local agencies, and in 2021 we had 20 local agencies assisting.
4. Targeted enumeration locations. Over the past 3 years the HPS team has developed a reporting relationship with the community and regularly responds to reports of people experiencing street homelessness in the community. As such, staff were able to utilize their first-hand knowledge of known and reported locations to prioritize. As well, enumeration location feedback was requested from internal health and social services staff and community partners to ensure we were targeting our time and resources to enumerate areas known to have people frequently sleeping and staying.

In total, approximately 91 street locations were visited by Social Services & Housing staff over the course of 2 days from 9am-6pm. In addition to the street locations, Housing Staff were available in office to enumerate anyone who was able to participate over the phone and community partners enumerated agency clientele. Enumeration efforts were focused on the following areas in Haldimand & Norfolk Counties:

#### Norfolk

- Was covered by staff for a total cumulative time of 22 hours
- Towns visited included: Simcoe, Delhi, Waterford, Port Dover, Port Rowan, and Long Point.
- 45% of the population area was covered (as per Statistics Canada Census, 2016)

#### Haldimand

- Was covered by staff for a total cumulative time of 17 hours
- Towns visited included: Dunnville, Hagersville, Caledonia, Cayuga, Jarvis & Nanticoke.
- 46% of the population area was covered (as per Statistics Canada Census, 2016)

### **Community Partners**

In preparation for the second homelessness enumeration, HPS staff reached out to 26 local agencies to discuss participation and involvement with enumeration. Of the 26 contacted, 20 confirmed their participation. This is a 60% increase in participation from 2018. In total, 43 staff and volunteers participating from Social Services and Housing, community partner agencies, and community volunteers.

The community partners and organizations that participated in enumeration from their agencies included:

- |                                                                                  |                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ○ Norfolk OPP                                                                    | ○ Community Living Access Support Services     |
| ○ Haldimand OPP                                                                  | ○ Norfolk Association for Community Living     |
| ○ Holmes House                                                                   | ○ Ontario Parole Probation (Simcoe office)     |
| ○ CMHA                                                                           | ○ Norfolk Pregnancy Centre                     |
| ○ Church Out Serving                                                             | ○ Salvation Army Simcoe                        |
| ○ Indwell                                                                        | ○ Salvation Army Dunnville                     |
| ○ RAAM Clinic                                                                    | ○ Haldimand Norfolk Women's Services           |
| ○ True Experience                                                                | ○ Youth Unlimited                              |
| ○ Victim Services of Haldimand, Norfolk, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation | ○ Haldimand Norfolk Health and Social Services |
| ○ Norfolk EMS                                                                    |                                                |
| ○ Haldimand EMS                                                                  |                                                |

## Key Enumeration Findings

In total, 350 individuals were tallied as part of the enumeration, with 102 individuals screening “in” to complete a survey. **A total of 117 individuals were found to be experiencing homelessness on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

- 33.4% of the people who were contacted as part of the enumeration, were experiencing homelessness at that point-in-time (night of November 17<sup>th</sup>), compared to 8% in 2018.

Of the 102 people experiencing homelessness who completed a survey:

- 20% reported as being unsheltered (examples of this include sleeping outside in a public space, in an encampment/tent or in a vehicle), compared to 7% in 2018
- 16% reported being emergency sheltered, compared to 42% in 2018
- 62% reported as being provisionally accommodated, compared to 51% in 2018, which captures those who fall under the “hidden homeless” category (examples of this include couch-surfing, transitional housing, treatment facilities, and jail).

This data concludes that on any given night in the Counties of Haldimand and Norfolk there are at least 117 people experiencing homelessness. Of the 102 people who completed a survey, 52% met the Federal definition of chronic homelessness and 26% met the definition of episodic homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

- The top reasons that caused the respondent to lose their housing most recently included: 35% reported not having enough income to afford housing, 24% reported a substance use issue and 14% reported that the building they were living in was sold or renovated.
- Notable income sources included: 40% social assistance (Ontario Works), 39% disability benefits (ODSP), 15% employment (casual, part-time, or full-time), and 9% senior’s benefits (CPP/OAS/GIS). 6% reported as having no source of income.
- 23% of respondents reported their housing loss was related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The average age of a person’s experiencing homelessness was 40. The largest category of individuals experiencing homelessness is the 25–35-year-old age group, with 35% of the respondents falling into this category. In addition, 10% of respondents were youth (18-24 years old) and 5% were seniors (over 65 years old).
- Of the respondents, 61% were male and 38% identified as female, with the remaining respondents identifying as non-cis-gender category. Non-cis-gender used to include people who do not have the same sex and gender but do not identify as transgender.
- The average age at which people first experienced homelessness is 31 years old.
- 50% of respondents identified as having an illness or medical condition, 39% identified as having a physical limitation, 41% identified as having a learning or

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing defined “chronic homelessness” as “referring to people, often with disabling conditions, who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year. Episodic Homelessness is defined as individuals who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year.

cognitive limitation, 72% identified as having a mental health issue and 70% identified as having a substance use issue.

- 17% of respondents identified as Indigenous (First Nation, Metis, Inuit, or Indigenous ancestry)
- 27% of respondents had been involved with the child welfare or foster care system.

### **Recommendations for Future System Planning**

The results of this second homelessness enumeration validate that homelessness exists in our small towns and communities within Haldimand and Norfolk and that it is more visible than it was in 2018. Specialized services and supports across social service sectors are essential and necessary to ensure the most vulnerable people are prioritized for homelessness and re-housing services.

Continuing to enhance the housing focused assessment/triage work necessary to prioritize those most at risk of homelessness is required both internally as an organization and externally throughout the communities of Haldimand and Norfolk. This function is currently completed by the HPS team which streamlined several previously external outsourced functions into one coordinated access point, currently known as the Intake /Diversion Line. Since October 2018, the HPS team has been operating the Coordinated Access System as a front door of access for service, benefits and support for households experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

There is significant cost to preventing and ending homelessness required at all levels of government and community. The cost of not making effort to reduce and end homelessness is far greater both economically and in the toll that it takes on human existence.

The keys to success in reaching functional zero and effectively ending homelessness are three pronged:

1. Housing supply – there must be enough affordable housing for all residents of varying income levels in our local communities.
2. Adequate supports for successful housing stability – there must be adequate supply of a range of housing types with varying types of supports available.
3. Access to support services – Once there is supply of a range of support services, they must be accessible and free of service system gaps across sectors.

It is important to note that the primary mechanism for preventing and ending homelessness is access to safe, appropriate, accessible, and affordable housing with support opportunities. Haldimand and Norfolk have made great strides in understanding the roots of homelessness, assessing, and implementing programming and service system management focused on prevention and response to homelessness as appropriate, and continues to dedicate resources to reduce overall homelessness in a responsible and accountable manner.

### **Financial Services Comments:**

#### **Norfolk**

The Approved 2021 Levy Supported Operating Budget included \$1,641,200 for CHPI; sufficient budget, funded by the MMAH, to support programs inclusive of Housing Enumeration. Costs for the 2021 program totaled \$17,686.

The report as presented does not include any financial implications. Additional initiatives resulting from the Enumeration findings will be presented to Council for decision, at which point any financial implications will be determined and outlined.

#### **Haldimand**

[Haldimand Finance staff have reviewed this report and agree with the information provided by Norfolk Financial Services. Future costs over and above the 100% funding envelope would be cost shared based on the applicable cost sharing agreement, and should be ranked and evaluated during the appropriate budget process.]

### **Interdepartmental Implications:**

#### **Norfolk**

[To be completed by staff from other Norfolk divisions that have been involved, i.e., Purchasing, Legal, HR.]

#### **Haldimand**

It is understood that this report is for information only.

This report aligns with the Haldimand County Council Priority – Affordable / Social Housing, to take the necessary steps and examine options related to implementing an affordable and social housing strategy. Understanding the root of homelessness will help to support this initiative.

### **Consultation(s):**

[List divisions/individuals who have been involved.]

### **Strategic Plan Linkage:**

1. Vibrant, Creative Communities – Where we fail our most vulnerable, we risk reaching the goal of achieving “beautiful, safe neighborhoods with a strong sense of community and great place to live.”
2. Optimal Place for Business – We find our unsheltered homelessness in our downtown core of Simcoe, primarily.
3. Quality Infrastructure – Completing homelessness enumeration every 2 years continues to highlight community need for housing and support development locally.

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## **Conclusion:**

While enumeration findings are an important metric in the local picture of homelessness, it is important to understand the limitations of any enumeration and keep it in context that the results are a “moment in time” and always an underrepresentation of the actual number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. It cannot be concluded that homelessness is getting better or worse in Haldimand and Norfolk with enumeration results alone. Data, analysis, and service system development at both the micro, (program level), and macro, (population level), are vital to the success of reaching functional zero in the fight against homelessness. When achieved, Functional Zero will be reflected in the results of enumeration, but the results themselves are not a reflection of whether we have been successful, and continue to be successful, in meeting the needs consistently of those experiencing homelessness.

## **Attachment(s):**

## **Approval:**

Submitted By:  
Heidy VanDyk  
Acting General Manager, Health and  
Social Services  
For more information, call:  
519-426-6170 ext. 3120

Reviewed By:  
Stephanie Rice  
Acting Director, Social Services &  
Housing  
For more information, call:  
519-426-6170 ext. 3122

Prepared By:  
Louise Lovell  
Program Manager, Homeless Prevention Services  
For more information, call:  
519-426-6170 ext. 3762

Nicole Wagenaar  
Intake/Diversion Worker, Homeless Prevention Services  
For more information, call:  
519-426-6170 ext. 3241