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**From:** Switzer, Barbara on behalf of Regional Clerk  
**Sent:** Monday, May 4, 2020 2:57 PM  
**Subject:** Regional Council Decision - Social Service Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic  
**Attachments:** Social Service Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic.pdf

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On April 30, 2020 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. Council authorize the Commissioner, Community and Health Services and the Regional Chairman to adjust, re-allocate, cancel or provide new Community Investment Fund funding for projects and initiatives in 2020 to maximize funding for priority social service initiatives that respond to COVID-19 needs.
2. Council authorize the Commissioner, Community and Health Services and the Regional Chairman to direct any new federal, provincial or other external funding York Region receives for social services towards eligible priority projects and initiatives that respond to COVID-19 needs.
3. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services report back on the progress of social service initiatives the Region undertakes and funds in support of the COVID-19 global pandemic.
4. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the local municipalities, the United Way Greater Toronto and local Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Joseph Silva, Director, Strategies and Partnerships at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74182 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

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Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

# **The Regional Municipality of York**

Committee of the Whole  
Community and Health Services  
April 16, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

## **Social Service Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

### **1. Recommendations**

1. Council authorize the Commissioner, Community and Health Services and the Regional Chairman to adjust, re-allocate, cancel or provide new Community Investment Fund funding for projects and initiatives in 2020 to maximize funding for priority social service initiatives that respond to COVID-19 needs.
2. Council authorize the Commissioner, Community and Health Services and the Regional Chairman to direct any new federal, provincial or other external funding York Region receives for social services towards eligible priority projects and initiatives that respond to COVID-19 needs.
3. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services report back on the progress of social service initiatives the Region undertakes and funds in support of the COVID-19 global pandemic.
4. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the local municipalities, the United Way Greater Toronto and local Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament.

### **2. Summary**

This report responds to the request made at the [April 2, 2020](#) meeting of Council for information on the needs of vulnerable residents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, actions in response, and recommendations on Regional funding to enable the Region to respond to the pandemic and the social service needs. This report focuses on the social service needs of vulnerable residents. Health needs are addressed through regular updates by the Medical Officer of Health.

#### **Key Points:**

- The Region has taken decisive action as the COVID-19 emergency has evolved, by adapting delivery of essential regional programs and services while putting new structures and supports in place to contain spread of the virus, protect the health and safety of residents, and start to address emerging social service needs. The situation is dynamic, and actions will continue to be implemented and evolve.

- The Region is one player in the broader system supporting York Region residents, with a variety of mandates and programs for delivery of human services. The Region is adapting and enhancing core services to respond to the growing needs in York Region as a consequence of the COVID-19 global pandemic in areas such as homelessness, children's services, income supports and affordable housing.
- For social issues beyond the scope of Regional services, the Region has partnered with United Way Greater Toronto to work with community agencies to monitor trends and needs, and formulate responses to address impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups through community partnerships.
- Immediate Regional actions focus on preventing the spread of COVID-19 and maintaining economic stability for our most vulnerable residents. This work includes initiatives to help the shelter and housing with supports system adapt to meet emergency requirements, implement a temporary rent benefit program for those in community housing, and giving flexibility to funded social service agencies to help address immediate needs resulting from COVID-19. The expected incremental costs of the housing and homelessness response alone are expected to exceed the provincial funding allocated to date.
- The Region is reviewing existing programs and initiatives so they can be better positioned to respond to social service needs, including projects funded under the Community Investment Fund. In 2020 funding for projects and initiatives may be augmented or amended to better address COVID-19 community needs; new projects and initiatives for the funding may also be introduced to support the Region's response.
- Regional activities complement Federal and Provincial Government actions, including various supports for immediate and longer-term needs announced through [COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#) and [Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19](#), respectively.

### 3. Background

#### **York Region has taken action to protect the health and safety of York Region residents in the face of COVID-19 global pandemic**

On January 23, 2020 York Region's Public Health Emergency Operations Centre was activated – more than a month before York Region's first case of COVID-19 was announced on February 29, 2020. The Health Emergency Operations Centre directs its efforts and resources toward the public health response. As the global and local context of COVID-19 became more acute and Public Health needed more resources, the Community and Health Services Emergency Operations Center opened on March 3, 2020. The Regional Emergency Operations Centre was fully activated on March 16, 2020.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, Public Health and Paramedic and Seniors Services have been at the forefront fighting to contain the spread of the virus. The activities and planning of these program areas are not included in the report as its focus is on social services. Information about the activities of these branches is available in the [April 2, 2020](#) presentation to Council on the Region's response to COVID-19, and through regular updates to Council and Committee by the Medical Officer of Health.

## **York Region has taken many actions to contain the spread of COVID-19 over the last six weeks**

Social service programs have joined the fight to contain the spread of COVID-19, help the overburdened healthcare sector and help maintain the health and safety of residents. As outlined in the [April 2, 2020](#) presentation by the Chief Administrative Officer to Council, York Region's Response to COVID-19 has resulted in changes to how essential public facing programs are delivered, and in some instances, programs have been put on hold. For example:

- Providing social assistance, children's services and homelessness supports over the phone rather than in person
- Completing only urgent repairs in Housing York Inc. resident units
- Partnering with Public Health to provide guidance and supports to Emergency Housing providers to assist them in protecting staff and residents while maintaining supportive programming
- Enhancing resources for Access York to respond to increased calls/emails related to COVID-19

## **The Federal and Provincial Governments have enacted new legislation, emergency orders and increased funding**

While the Region has acted to protect the health and safety of its residents and to keep essential programs and services running, the Federal government has focused efforts on protecting the immediate and longer-term needs of Canadians through its comprehensive [COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#) and associated funding. The *COVID-19 Economic Response Plan* includes:

- Canada Emergency Response Benefit of \$2,000 a month for up to four months to eligible workers who have lost their income due to COVID-19 and are not eligible for Employment Insurance regular or sickness benefits. This amount is roughly equivalent to what a full-time wage earner would receive
- Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy of 75% of an employee's wages, up to \$847 per week, to support employers with gross revenue drops of at least 15% in March and 30% in April and May. The program is in effect from March 15 to June 6, 2020
- \$100 million to national, regional, and local organizations across Canada to purchase, transport and distribute food and other basic necessities and to hire temporary help to fill volunteer shortages
- One-time special payment by early May through the Goods and Services Tax credit for low- and modest-income families. The average additional benefit will be close to \$400 for single individuals and close to \$600 for couples

- An extra \$300 per child through the Canada Child Benefit for 2019 to 2020
- \$9 million through United Way Canada for local organizations to support practical services to seniors
- \$157.5 million to the Federal homelessness program, “Reaching Home”. For York Region, this funding is administered by United Way Greater Toronto. Allocations have not yet been announced

[Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19](#) (March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update) was released to mitigate the immediate impacts of physical distancing and closure of non-essential workplaces, schools and daycares and includes:

- One-time payment of \$200 per child up to 12 years of age and \$250 for those 0 to 21 years of age with special needs, to help families pay for extra costs associated with school and child care center closures
- \$5 million to support coordination of subsidized deliveries of meals, medicines and other essentials by working with local business, charities and health services
- \$100 million through Employment Ontario for skills training programs for workers affected by COVID-19
- The Social Services Relief Fund – a \$200 million fund created to protect health and safety of Ontario's most vulnerable people. It is comprised of:
  - \$52 million to expand access to the emergency assistance program administered by Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program to provide financial support and help with basic needs, such as food and rent
  - \$148 million to the 47 consolidated municipal service managers and district social service administration boards in Ontario for March 15, 2020 to March 31, 2021 to help address local needs. York Region was allocated \$4.98 million to be managed through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiatives program
- \$9 million in direct support for energy costs by expanding eligibility for the Low-income Energy Assistance program
- Proposal to double the Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for low-income seniors for six months starting in April 2020. If implemented, this would increase the maximum payment to \$166 per month for individuals and \$322 per month for couples.

The federal and provincial governments have committed to a wide range of new and expanded financial supports. The Region is tracking these programs, and promoting their use.

## **Community Investment Fund supports community-based projects targeting gaps in social services**

In [October 2019](#), Council endorsed funding of \$5.6 million for 45 projects to be delivered by 38 agencies in 2020. Funded agencies include The Food Bank of York Region, York Region Food Network, Krasman Centre, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Inn from the Cold, March of Dimes and 360 Kids. Through the Community Investment Fund, the Region supports non-profit agencies to deliver projects and initiatives that improve the well-being of vulnerable residents, particularly those living with low to moderate income. The program leverages the strengths of community agencies familiar with local needs and with the expertise to support specific populations. Projects include collection and delivery of food donations, counselling for youth experiencing trauma, mental health and substance abuse, and technical and soft skills employment training for marginalized groups.

The Region is leveraging the Community Investment Fund as part of its COVID-19 response. In the immediate term, agencies were given flexibility to use committed funding for emergency needs. Staff is now reviewing all projects to determine which should be augmented, which could pivot to help address the COVID-19 global pandemic, and which should end because they can no longer reasonably be implemented.

## **4. Analysis**

### **Ripple effects of pandemic responses are impacting vulnerable populations**

Needs and issues facing vulnerable populations in York Region are becoming more pronounced, as a result of mobility restrictions, job loss and isolation as more restrictions aimed at reducing the spread of the virus are put in place. As community food programs, drop-ins, libraries, community centers and school meal programs have closed, the most vulnerable are relying more than ever on the Region's critical supports and services to get by.

All Greater Toronto Area regional governments are generally consistent in how they are responding to community needs. Staff is participating on many association and provincial tables to share information and actions.

### **The most common need is financial help**

A scan of community agencies, local municipalities, and advisory boards (Human Services Planning Board, Accessibility Advisory Committee, Community Partnership Council) was conducted two weeks ago. Forty agencies and stakeholders responded. They were asked what the most important community needs are and the top challenges their organizations are facing in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations served. This scan will be updated regularly and will help inform the work of the Community Coordination Table, described later in this report.

Data from Access York is being monitored to help understand evolving needs. In March, the highest numbers of calls were related to COVID-19 (3,700 calls), and financial assistance

(2,041 applying for Ontario Works, 1,830 calls from existing Ontario Works clients about payments and benefits, and 254 calls for help with utility costs). There were also 630 calls about requesting subsidized housing.

Attachment 1 summarizes findings from the community scan, check-ins with community partners, local municipalities, Access York, and 211 FindHelp.

### **York Region is delivering enhanced supports under provincially mandated programs while leveraging Regionally-funded initiatives and networks**

The Region is responsible for the following social services, each of which is described below along with information on emerging issues. Detailed information on the Region's current and planned short term social service response is provided in Attachment 2. Short-term critical goals for social service actions are to:

- Prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially in vulnerable populations
- Maintain the health and safety of vulnerable populations, especially with respect to housing and shelter
- Reduce the burden on the health care system

Initiatives that support these goals will mitigate health impacts and support responses focused on resolving the health crisis. As short-term goals (see Attachment 2) are addressed, medium term goals will be established such as enhancing efforts to prevent housing losses, identifying initiatives required to help with recovery efforts, and supporting programs needed to address societal issues as communities emerge from the pandemic. Medium term actions will include monitoring of new and evolved programs and supports implemented by senior levels of government, to maximize their use in York Region for eligible households and organizations.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

### **In its role as Service Manager, the Region is encouraging community housing providers to also work with tenants and has established a short-term benefit for eligible low-income market rent households in community housing**

The Region's role in housing is as Service Manager for the system and a housing provider (*Housing Services Act, 2011*). The Region is responsible for funding and oversight of community housing providers and operates its own municipal community housing provider – Housing York Inc.

The April 1st rent collection for Housing York Inc. is only slightly below normal, however staff anticipate rent revenues will decrease the longer the pandemic goes on. To mitigate potential impacts, Housing York Inc. delivered information on temporary income supports to tenants, and is working with affected tenants, adjusting rents for subsidized households and establishing payment plans for market rent households.

## **Province has suspended enforcement of residential evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic until further notice**

Landlords may continue to serve eviction notices for non-payment of rent, however, the Landlord and Tenant Board has suspended all hearings related to eviction applications, unless the matter relates to an urgent issue like an illegal act or serious impairment of safety. The Province encourages landlords to work with tenants to establish arrangements to keep tenants in their homes, including deferring rent or other payment arrangements. The Community Legal Clinic York Region (Community Investment funded agency) is educating York Regional Police about illegal evictions at this time, so officers have information needed when called in these circumstances.

When the moratorium on enforcing evictions is lifted, or after months of income challenges and tenants are facing months of arrears, the number of evictions could increase. Staff have requested information from the Landlord and Tenant Board on the number of potential evictions in the system.

## **Applications for assistance through the Region's Homelessness Prevention Program and Housing Stability Program have not yet increased but are expected to escalate**

These programs provide supports to eligible clients, such as funding for first and last month's rent, rental and utility arrears, urgent medical needs, and landlord and tenant mediation. While there is sufficient funding for the time-being, staff anticipate additional demands on the program as the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic evolve and escalate.

## **SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS**

### **The Region has opened a 15 room Self-Isolation Shelter for people experiencing homelessness who have been tested positive or awaiting results for COVID-19 and extended Community Investment funded seasonal shelters**

The Region is the Service Manager for services for people who are homeless (*Housing Services Act, 2011*). The need to adhere to physical distancing and self-isolation requirements in the emergency housing shelters is a major pressure.

The shelters provide safe temporary accommodations for residents who are homeless. The next step is to open a Transitional Isolation Shelter to provide those who are homeless a space to self-isolate for 14 days, help manage the eventual closure of the two seasonal shelters, and address space issues in emergency housing. The Region has provided resources and guidance to service providers to help them operate safely, however, lack of personal protective equipment and space are major concerns.



## **Emergency Housing Providers are seeing an approximately 25% decrease in staffing**

Due to staff feeling ill, self-isolating, or refusing work there is a decrease in staffing. In addition, there is pressure on staff due to extra shifts and having to find ways to encourage clients to stay inside.

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

### **Emergency Child Care Centres in York Region will be located near all three regional hospitals; two of these centres were ready to open the week of April 6 and a third the week of April 13, 2020**

York Region's 540 licensed child care centres and 70 EarlyON programs were required to close on March 17, 2020 under a declaration of emergency by the Province. This quickly became an issue for many health care and other front-line parents. The Ministry of Education responded by permitting service managers to opt to establish Emergency Child Care Centres to provide no fee child care for eligible health care and other frontline workers. As of April 9, 80 applications for child care have been submitted. Some of York Region's Early Interventionists have been redeployed to support these emergency centres; helping children adjust to their new routine and surroundings, especially children with special needs.

### **Several services continue to be provided via telephone, including Child Care Fee Subsidies (licensed home care continues to operate), Early Intervention Services, Infant and Child Development Services and Inclusion Support Services**

All face-to-face meetings with Children's Services clients have been discontinued however the needs of children and families have not stopped. Almost 80% of families are taking part in virtual programming to support their children with special needs. Video visits will soon be available for families with children who are medically frail or have other special needs.

### **The ongoing stability of child care centers is a concern because these centers will be needed again when the crisis stabilizes and parents return to work**

Operators still have fixed costs to pay, even when their doors are not open. On April 10, 2020, the province issued an emergency order that prevents closed child care operators across the province from charging parents fees when care is not being provided (staff do not know how many child care centers were charging parents fees in York Region as the Region does not have oversight of this part of the market). The province has said it will work with the child care sector and federal, municipal and First Nations partners on a plan to ensure the sustainability of the sector. Staff participate on a provincial technical working group, and more information on how operators will be supported is expected soon.

## **SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND INCOME SUPPORTS**

The Region administers Social Assistance program (Ontario Works) on behalf of the Province. The Province has expanded access to temporary emergency assistance under

Ontario Works for those in financial crisis who have no access to other supports, including those who are waiting for support from the federal government to become available.

Staff are being redeployed to support an 84% year over year increase in applications for social assistance (871 applications).

## **YORK REGION COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND**

### **Projects and associated funding may need to be quickly adjusted to respond to current realities**

COVID-19 has impacted current initiatives under the Community Investment Fund. Similar to the experience of other organizations, the pandemic has resulted in substantial changes to the way community agencies deliver programs. In-person programs, either in a one-on-one or group setting, have been suspended and, where possible, adjusted for virtual delivery. School-based programming, such as providing breakfast and snacks at select schools, has stopped with closure of the schools.

There are programs funded by the Community Investment Fund that are escalating and scaling up to respond to community needs. To sustain shelter capacity during the pandemic and help prevent the spread of the virus, seasonal shelters funded under Community Investment were extended. Extension of the seasonal shelters has bought time for other solutions to be implemented, such as the isolation shelter and planned transitional shelter.

Food access agencies have also started to work with the Region through its coordination table with United Way to understand issues, identify gaps and collaborate on solutions.

It is expected that some projects will be scaled up, reduced, or cancelled. These changes to programming are resulting in changes to funding required to support initiatives.

### **Funding made available from reductions or cancellations of projects will be redirected to existing projects that need to be expanded or to new initiatives required to address gaps**

Additional projects and initiatives may be required as part of the Region's response. Normally project and funding approvals under the Community Investment Fund are brought to Council for approval. To be able to quickly respond to evolving community needs, it is recommended that Council authorise the Commissioner, Community and Health Services and the Regional Chairman to approve changes to projects and funding in 2020 (including any new projects required to help with the community response).

Attachment 3 provides a summary of short-term actions within the community sector that York Region is supporting.

## **York Region and the United Way Greater Toronto are co-chairing a Community Coordination Table to address evolving needs**

The Region has a role as a facilitator and capacity builder in the human services sector. In this role, the Region is co-leading a COVID-19 Community Coordination initiative with United Way Greater Toronto to coordinate actions on emerging needs of vulnerable people that are not directly within Region's mandate. Initial actions include:

- Making emergency funding available to community agencies via United Way to target emerging issues identified in the community scan
- Establishing working groups to coordinate efforts on the ground and share resources to increase access to food, support people who are homeless, and enable access to seniors supports
- Increasing capacity of organizations to access/leverage funding available through other levels of government and foundations by providing information on available funding opportunities, a virtual grant-writing workshop and volunteers to develop funding proposals

This Community Coordination Table will continue to provide a forum for community agencies and local municipalities to identify issues as they emerge and explore opportunities to address them in a coordinated manner. The Community Coordination Table, and the supporting working groups, will be useful in providing advice on initiatives and programs for funding. For example, currently the United Way Greater Toronto has received approximately \$900,000 for seniors supports in the regions it serves, and will be allocated Federal funding from the Reaching Home program to help address homelessness (the allocation amount has not yet been determined). Decisions by the Region on potential reallocation of Community Investment Funding will similarly be informed by the Community Coordination Table and its working groups.

## **5. Financial**

### **Additional funding will be required to fully support and sustain the Region's social service response**

While it is possible that some initiatives could be accommodated within the Community and Health Services department's approved 2020 Operating Budget and Outlook, additional funding will be required to fully support and sustain Regional initiatives in response to the needs of communities and vulnerable populations. See Table 1 for related programs in the Community and Health Services 2020 approved budget.

**Table 1**  
**2020 Approved Budget**

<b>Operating Budget</b> (\$ in Millions)	<b>2020 Approved</b> (Gross)	<b>2020 Approved</b> (Net)
Housing Services	110.0	67.3
Social Assistance	100.1	10.4
Homelessness Community Programs	27.4	11.1
Children Services	181.5	22.4

The Region anticipates receiving federal and provincial funding to help offset COVID-19 - related expenditures. Information on federal and provincial funding for the Region's emergency response is very limited at this time.

**One-time provincial funding of \$4,981,700 has been allocated by the Province through the Community Homelessness Initiative under the Social Services Relief Fund**

On April 1, 2020, York Region was notified it would receive an allocation of \$4,981,700 from the Social Services Relief Fund. This one-time funding flows through the existing Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative agreement with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and is to cover March 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. Funding will be provided on a phased basis, with 50% to be available in April 2020, 25% in early July, and subsequent quarters paid based on projected and actual expenditures. After the first 50%, the balance of the allocation may be subject to reallocation or adjustment by the Ministry.

**Staff recommend using the Social Services Relief Fund allocation to create emergency shelter space and towards incremental costs of homelessness support programs**

York Region as service manager has flexibility to determine how to best use the Social Services Relief funding to respond to the needs of vulnerable people during this COVID-19 crisis. The Ministry permits a wide range of potential uses, however the funding allocation is not sufficient to cover costs beyond the most critical of emergency needs.

The Region has already begun to incur costs for mandated and new social services as part of its COVID-19 response, including costs associated with extending operations of two seasonal shelters, and implementing a self-isolation site for symptomatic or COVID-19-positive homeless individuals. Staff is also currently developing plans for a transitional homeless shelter, as described earlier in this report. Descriptions of these projects are also

provided in Attachment 2. Housing programs also help curb the spread of COVID-19 by providing places for self-isolation and recovery.

In addition to these emergency response projects which focus on helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19, demands on the Region's Homelessness prevention and stabilization programs, including Housing with Support Programs (whose needs mirror long-term care needs), are also expected to escalate, and additional funding will be required.

The estimated costs of these initiatives alone will use up almost the entire Social Services Relief fund allocation, as shown in Table 2. A best case scenario is assumed whereby the worst of the COVID-19 impacts will be over by the end of July. No assumptions are made at this time for possible costs related to a second wave of COVID-19 this fall.

**Table 2**  
**Estimated Cost of Immediate Emergency Response Needs for People**  
**Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness**

<b>Emergency Response Project</b>	<b>Estimated Costs as of April 10, 2020</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Extend two seasonal shelters	\$368,430	Estimated costs a 1 month extension, along with a provision for a further 1 month extension if required (depending upon when the Transitional Shelter is operational)
Establish Isolation Shelter at Leeder Place starting April 3, 2020	\$1,184,827	Estimated costs assume 4 months of operation (April – July), and include costs of housing and support services for the families relocated to make Leeder Place available for use as an isolation shelter
Establish 50 unit Transitional Shelter – not yet implemented	\$1,241,380	Estimated costs assume 3 months (May -July) of operation. Costs include accommodations, food, operational staffing and wrap around support services
Expansion of Self Isolation	\$350,000	Includes 4 months (April -

<b>Emergency Response Project</b>	<b>Estimated Costs as of April 10, 2020</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Services		July) of supports
Housing with Supports	\$100,000	Includes 2 months of financial supports for operators of housing with supports (April-May) to help address COVID-19 related costs
Housing Stability Program	\$287,200	Cost estimate for anticipated increased demand for this program for 4 months (April-July)
Homelessness Prevention Program	\$358,400	Cost estimate for anticipated increased demand for this program for 4 months (April-July)
OW Food Vouchers	\$100,000	Cost estimate for anticipated increased demand for 4 months (April-July)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,990,237</b>	

Staff recommend the additional Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Fund allocation (Social Services Relief funding) be applied against eligible incremental costs associated with the Region's social service response, including costs to add emergency capacity to the shelter system (extension of seasonal shelters, new isolation shelter, new transitional shelter) and sustain homelessness prevention and housing stabilization and support programs as outlined above. These incremental costs total approximately \$4.0 million until July 2020, based on early staff estimates. While the currently estimated costs could be less than the Social Services Relief Fund allocation, they only represent a part of the overall costs.

**Staff is reviewing projects approved under the Community Investment Fund to assess if some funds could be reallocated to emergency response activities and projects**

If there is any remaining Social Services Relief funding, it will be used for other emergency needs, including potentially through the Community Investment Fund to support emergency responses by community agencies. Funding for community agencies will also be available through reallocation of 2020 Community Investment funds. In addition, there may be further

Federal and/or Provincial funding. It is recommended that the Commissioner, Community and Health Services and the Regional Chairman be authorized to allocate remaining Social Services Relief funds, reallocate Community Investment Funds, and allocate any new Federal or Provincial funds. Staff will look to the Region's coordination table with United Way for advice on activities that could be funded.

Community and Health Services staff will continue to monitor needs and will bring forward any additional required funding as part of the upcoming budget process.

## **6. Local Impact**

All actions taken by the Region in response to COVID-19 are for the benefit of residents across all local municipalities. The Region continues to respond to evolving needs in its core service areas, including homelessness, children's services, income supports and affordable housing. Local municipalities were invited to participate in the community scan to ensure their concerns were taken into consideration in developing short-term actions and will be included in future scans (see Attachment 3). Engagement with local municipalities will continue as COVID-19 response evolves in our community.

## **7. Conclusion**

At each stage of this emergency, the Region has taken steps to keep residents safe, to provide up-to-date information and to contain the spread of COVID-19 by modifying and temporarily suspending some programs to adhere to physical distancing. As the COVID-19 emergency and containment efforts persist, the Region is seeing negative social impacts on our most vulnerable populations; whose needs (see Attachment 1) require ongoing supports to adequately address.

Going forward, the Region will continue to prioritize resources where they are needed most; leverage existing resources, partnerships and community assets; coordinate with stakeholders; and, work to minimize longer-term impacts of the emergency. As the short-term actions outlined in Attachment 2 and 3 are implemented and needs addressed, staff will report back to Council with a status report and to propose medium-term actions, such as enhancing efforts to prevent housing losses and downstream recovery planning.

The federal and provincial governments have implemented funding to support individuals and sectors (such as for seniors and food banks), and staff anticipate these programs will evolve and new ones launched. Through Access York, York Region will continue to provide information to individuals about these opportunities and direction on how to access them. Through the Community Coordination Table and its working group, and regular communications to community agencies, York Region will continue to share information about funding opportunities.

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For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Silva, Director, Strategies and Partnerships at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74182. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: **Katherine Chislett**  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

April 15, 2020  
Attachments (3)  
10703747



# York Region COVID-19 Community Scan Results

## TOP NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY:



### Financial

- Loss of income



### Navigation of systems to access services

- Access to information
- Complexity of forms



### Transportation or mobility

- Safety
- Affordability



### Social isolation

- Loneliness



### Homelessness/Housing

- COVID-19 containment/capacity
- Affordability



### Food

- Access
- Staffing resources



### Mental health and addiction supports

- Access to supports



### Personal hygiene/Disinfectant products

- Market availability



### Health information

- Multilingual sources

## TOP CHALLENGES AGENCIES FACE:



### Money

- Staffing resources



### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Market availability



### Technology

- Capacity



### Staffing

- Staff illness and isolation
- Need for volunteers



### Language

- Multilingual

## Short-Term Actions within Region's Community and Health Services Programs (as of April 9, 2020)

Regional Mandate Area	Short-Term Actions (estimated timing to June 2020)
Affordable Housing	<p><b>Short term goal - help people remain in their homes to shelter in place and avoid spread of COVID-19</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement a short-term (4 month) rent benefit program for market rent households living in community housing (non-profit and co-operative housing providers, and Housing York) who have lost employment income as a result of COVID-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch a short term rent-benefit program to help eligible low to moderate income market rent households by May 1, 2020</li> <li>• The new short-term benefit will be funded through the existing Housing Services budget. Staff will monitor use of the program, to determine if additional funding is needed and/or the program timeline needs to be extended beyond four months</li> </ul> <p>Note: Households living in Housing York and other community housing providers who pay a subsidized rent will have their rents recalculated as usual</p> </li> <li>2. Implement the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program approved by <a href="#">Council</a> on April 2, 2020 to assist households on the Region's subsidized housing wait list living in private rental housing with a rent benefit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 260 households in year one of the program could receive a rent benefit administered by the Ministry of Finance to help with housing affordability. Funding received in year two of the program could support up to 340 households.</li> <li>• The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit is intended to help bridge the gap between the rent a household can afford to pay and the market rent of their unit</li> <li>• This benefit is intended to help households keep their housing costs around 30% of their income. Each month, participating households will receive a direct payment from the province to help pay their rent.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Postpone evictions in Housing York Inc. properties, except for those associated with criminal activity or serious safety issues, and encourage other community housing providers to do the same <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As with the private rental market, eviction applications before the Landlord and Tenant Board by Community Housing providers are on hold with the exception of criminal activity or serious safety issues</li> <li>• Housing York Inc. will postpone serving tenants with eviction notices. except for criminal activity or serious safety infractions. Staff will work with tenants to help manage rent payments, to avoid large and potentially un-payable arrears when the crisis abates.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

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Regional Mandate Area	Short-Term Actions (estimated timing to June 2020)
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Monitor to determine if additional funding will be needed for the Homelessness Prevention Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Region's Homelessness Prevention Program provides financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities and other housing costs to support people <i>not</i> receiving other Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Review the Housing Stability Program to determine if maximum funding permitted or frequency of supports needs to be increased and monitor to determine if additional funds will be needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Region's Housing Stability Program provides financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities and other housing costs to support people receiving Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Monitor eviction applications before the Landlord and Tenant Board to help plan and prepare for a potential increase in eviction orders when the moratorium is lifted in June. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request information from the Landlord and Tenant Board on cases</li> <li>• Partner with a non-profit organization (e.g., the Community Legal Clinic of York Region, a Community Investment Fund-supported agency) to promote awareness of tenant rights and obligations</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Services for People who are Homeless	<p><b>Short term goal - Support physical distancing, prevent spread, reduce potential burden on health care system</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Extend the two seasonal shelters for at least a month, to ensure a safe place to stay until a better solution can be implemented (see transitional shelter below) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the Region's Community Investment Fund, Mosaic, Interfaith, Out of the Cold provides seasonal sheltering for the southern part of the Region, and Inn from the Cold provides seasonal sheltering for the north. Seasonal shelters are primarily volunteer based, and provide very basic services (mats and meals). They are often appealing to people who prefer not to use the regular emergency housing system, and generally close by the end of March.</li> <li>• Mosaic and Inn from the Cold agreed to a temporary extension of their programs until April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup>, respectively</li> </ul> </li> <li>8. Assist providers of homelessness services to operate their services as safely as possible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interim Guidance for Emergency Housing Service Settings Providers on safe operations was provided to all community organizations serving people who are homeless on March 23, 2020, and guidance from the Ministry of Health was issued and distributed April 1, 2020.</li> </ul> </li> <li>9. Establish a Self-Isolation Shelter for people who are experiencing homelessness, and need a place to live when they are confirmed to have</li> </ol>

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	<p>COVID-19 or pending results of their COVID-19 test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opened 15-unit self-isolation shelter at Leeder Place, East Gwillimbury, on April 3, in partnership with Blue Door and Housing York Inc.</li> <li>The site primarily takes referrals from York Region hospitals, and currently (April 9) has three clients</li> <li>Families originally residing at Leeder Place have been temporarily relocated to a motel</li> </ul> <p><b>10.</b> Establish and operate a Transitional Isolation Shelter to provide self-isolation space for up to 14 days, including wrap- around services for longer term needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the seasonal shelters close, as people are moved from existing emergency housing to create more physical distancing, and as new people seek to enter the shelter system, it is important that the potential for spread of the virus is managed</li> <li>Plans for a transitional isolation shelter with about 50 self-contained units and a non-profit operator are currently being finalized.</li> </ul> <p><b>11.</b> Assist Emergency Housing Providers and Housing with Supports providers with funding to enable physical distancing as well as supporting them to allow people to take loved one's home during this pandemic, if this option is available and appropriate (which is allowed for in existing Housing with Supports Guidelines)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing with Supports (formerly domiciliary hostels) refers to licensed homes where daily meals and housing is provided to people who need supervision of their daily living activities. Residents are generally frail, elderly or have a mental health diagnosis. These are permanent homes for most people who stay there. There are 22 private sector operators in York Region. The Region's role is to provide fee assistance to eligible residents and provide oversight of the program including a licensing role. The Region provides subsidies for almost 400 beds in these homes. Other organizations that refer clients to the Housing with Supports Programs include hospitals.</li> <li>The most urgent priority is safety, which has been a challenge in view of the fact that the Ministry of Health guidance for (congregate) requires the use of personal protective equipment, for which there is a national and international shortage at this time. Staff are in regular contact with providers to support as much as possible safe operations.</li> <li>Other current issues are the higher costs of food and cleaning, staff retention, managing social distancing as well as isolation in an environment that faces similar challenges as Long Term Care Homes, and the challenges to staff of encouraging residents with complex needs to stay in their homes and not go out in the community. Staff have committed to finding options to provide additional financial support to</li> </ul>

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Regional Mandate Area	Short-Term Actions (estimated timing to June 2020)
	<p>Emergency Housing Providers and Housing with Support providers.</p> <p>Note: Housing and support for people with developmental disabilities falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services. On April 4, 2020, the Province announced \$40 million to support organizations that provide residential services for children and youth, people with developmental disabilities and emergency shelters for women and families fleeing domestic violence. Assisted Housing, Long Term Care homes and Supportive Housing (generally physical disabilities) fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>Note: Violence against Women Shelters fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services. On April 4, 2020, the Province announced \$40 million to support organizations that provide residential services for children and youth, people with developmental disabilities and emergency shelters for women and families fleeing domestic violence.</p>
Children's Services	<p><b>Short term goal - Support parents working in critical front line roles, support families (especially those whose children have special needs) and support service providers so that they can be available to serve when the restrictions on Child Care centers ease or are removed</b></p> <p><b>12. Establish an emergency child care service for essential workers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed program and safety standards, using Ministry of Health Guidelines</li> <li>Developed an application and eligibility requirements, including working with local municipalities to identify essential core service positions. Applications opened on April 6, 2020. As of April 9, 80 applications have been received.</li> <li>Worked with child care operators who expressed an interest and were able to prepare quickly to open emergency child care sites and received approval from the Ministry of Education to open ten centres initially.</li> <li>Two centers were ready to open the week of April 6, with a third to open the week of April 13. As the centers pass further inspections, and based on demand, additional centers will be opened.</li> </ul> <p><b>13. In collaboration with EarlyON providers across the Region, Early Interventionists will make resources available virtually to help all families find activities, supports and advice to keep young children busy and active</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early interventionists work with children with a variety of needs, including cognitive and other complex challenges, by supporting and coaching their families in home or child care centres to support healthy child development and growth. They also provide crucial coping skills and resources to parents. As entry into homes is no longer safe, staff continue to support families by connecting through phone visits to continue to offer support, coaching and resources to support families with children with special needs and we are getting ready to introduce video visits to enhance support to families. 80% of families are participating in</li> </ul>

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	<p>phone visits. As the closures last longer than originally anticipated, additional resources will be made available to support families in overcoming feelings of isolation by bringing together the expertise of Early Interventionists and EarlyON agencies to reach a broader audience.</p> <p><b>14.</b> Work with the Ministry of Education to determine how to promote sustainability of child care centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Education permitted the Region to flow Provincial funding to child care center operators in March and April equivalent to what they would have otherwise received for fee subsidies, basic operational funds, and wage subsidies. This permitted the operators to remain stable until a longer-term strategy could be put in place.</li> <li>• Regional staff is working on a provincial technical group to develop a longer-term strategy to assist operators in navigating provincial and federal supports and promote sustainability. Additional information on the Regional role and use of provincial funding is anticipated mid-April.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Assistance and Income Supports</b>	<p><b>Short term goal – Help low income residents access financial assistance, and as possible, additional financial help to address higher costs and lost community resources</b></p> <p><b>15.</b> Provide additional financial resources for people who receive Ontario Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of applications for Ontario Works has nearly doubled since March 2019. Redeployment and training of staff, and increased use of on-line application resources are enabling staff to respond to this growth</li> <li>• Implement as quickly as possible additional discretionary benefit amounts as permitted by the Province</li> </ul> <p><b>16.</b> Expand capacity to respond to growth in applications for Emergency Assistance by people who are not receiving financial help through social assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Assistance provides financial help to Ontario residents in a crisis or emergency situation, who do not have enough money for things like food and housing, for example, where they have been affected by COVID-19, are evicted, or leaving an abusive relationship</li> <li>• Funding up to \$733 per month for a single individual (more for larger households) is available for up to 48 days</li> </ul> <p>Note: Social Assistance and Emergency Assistance benefit costs are 100% paid for by the province. The Region is responsible for roughly 50% of the costs for administering these provincial programs.</p> <p><b>17.</b> Assist residents and community organizations to access financial supports available from other levels of government through information</p> <p>The federal and provincial governments have committed to a wide range of new and expanded financial supports. The Region is tracking these</p>

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	<p>programs and promoting their use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access York is providing information and referrals for Federal and Provincial COVID-19 assistance programs</li><li>• Information about resources for community organizations is shared through regular emails, and at the Community Coordination Table and its working groups</li></ul>

**Short-Term Actions within the Community Sector that the Region's  
Community and Health Services Programs are Supporting (as of April  
9, 2020)**

Community Priority Area	Short Term Actions (estimated timing to June 2020)
Community Development	<p><b>Short Term Goal: Pivot programs to support COVID-19 efforts for vulnerable people in the community, establish processes to monitor trends and issues, and respond to them</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review all projects funded for 2020 under the Region's Community Investment Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38 community agencies have been contracted to run 45 projects in 2020 to help address the needs of individuals experiencing low and moderate income in four priority areas. With the COVID-19 emergency, some projects may be over-subscribed, some could change to address needs, and others have ceased operations</li> <li>• Staff will review all projects to determine how unused/unspent dollars can be redirected to fill gaps and emerging priorities for vulnerable populations</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Establish and Co-chair with the United Way Greater Toronto a community coordination table to identify emerging needs and facilitate/coordinate collective emergency response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Partners table established March 23, with 49 member organizations as of April 9, 2020. Membership currently includes organizations such as 360 Kids, Canadian Mental Health Association, Community and Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS), York Region Centre for Community Safety and other human services organizations in York Region. The weekly meetings are held virtually</li> <li>• Working group on Homelessness began meeting April 14 and meets virtually twice a week. The group is an expansion of the Community Advisory Board established by the United Way Greater Toronto as a requirement of the federal Reaching Home program. Members include Blue Door Shelter, 360 Kids, Yellow Brick House, Sandgate, Canadian Mental Health Association, Mosaic and Inn from the Cold and others. This group will assist United Way with funding allocation decisions once the increased federal funding announced on April 4 is available</li> <li>• Working group on Food Security was established on April 2 and meets virtually weekly. Members include York Region Food Network, Food Bank of York Region, Second Harvest, CHATS, and other key organizations</li> <li>• Working group on seniors' issues to be established. This working group will assist the United Way Greater Toronto with allocating funding it has been given to support seniors</li> </ul> </li> </ol>



## ATTACHMENT 3

Community Priority Area	Short Term Actions (estimated timing to June 2020)
<b>Social Isolation</b>	<p><b>Short term goal: Help those who are isolated stay connected, especially those who are most vulnerable</b></p> <p>In addition to the challenges faced by housing, emergency housing, and housing with support providers who are trying to support and encourage residents to stay safe inside, the Community Scan found that addressing social isolation (loneliness) is one of the top needs in the community.</p> <p><b>3. Establish a resource toolkit for the frail, elderly and caregivers of seniors who are quarantined or in self-isolation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most vulnerable are faced with both physical and social isolation. These resources will help mitigate the enormous toll COVID-19 is taking on the mental health and well-being of seniors</li> <li>• To assist older adults and their caregivers in isolation exhibiting increased anxiety, depression and emotional stress, connections will be made with organizations such as CHATS, Alzheimer's Society and the United Way collaboration tables</li> <li>• Explore Mental Health and addiction virtual support options for people who are experiencing homelessness and/or people who receive Ontario Works</li> <li>• Conduct weekly check-in calls with Adult Day Program caregivers and clients to help identify individuals in crisis and provide support</li> </ul>
<b>Service Navigation and Language Supports</b>	<p><b>Short term goal: Help residents and community agencies to navigate services available, and improve multi-language access.</b></p> <p><b>4. Through our contractual relationship with 211 FindHelp and many service providers, support updating the service database and promote its use</b></p> <p>Note: Access York is using language line to provide information in multiple languages to callers</p>
<b>Food</b>	<p><b>Short term goal: Help people in need to access food</b></p> <p>Helping people to get access to food available from food banks or other sources was identified as one of the top needs in the Community Scan results. Also identified were challenges with staffing food banks.</p> <p>On April 3, 2020 the Federal Government announced \$100M for foodbanks in Canada. Various access points have been or are being established for food banks to apply for funding, such as through Second Harvest and Community Food Centres Canada.</p> <p><b>5. Increase food voucher program for those on Ontario Works using direct deposit</b></p>

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Community Priority Area	Short Term Actions (estimated timing to June 2020)
<b>Mobility /Transportation</b>	<p><b>Short term goal: Help make transit more affordable, safer and accessible for people who need it:</b></p> <p>Helping people to access safe and affordable transportation was identified as one of the top needs in the Community Scan results.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Leverage York Region's Transit Discount Program and Transit Assistance Program pilot to help people attend training or look for work or assist in getting to work</p>