

HOMELESSNESS

Service System Plan:

ATTACHMENT 1

2024 TO 2027



york.ca/PlanForHomelessness

June 2024


York Region

A MESSAGE FROM YORK REGION CHAIRMAN AND CEO AND MEMBERS OF REGIONAL COUNCIL



Chairman & CEO
Wayne Emerson

DRAFT

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Peoples including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. Today, this area is home to many diverse Indigenous Peoples, and we recognize their history, spirituality, culture and stewardship of this land. We also acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as our closest First Nation community.



Mayor
Frans Scarpitti
City of Markham



Regional Councilor
Michael Chan
City of Markham



Regional Councilor
Jim Jones
City of Markham



Regional Councilor
Joe Li
City of Markham



Regional Councilor
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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	6
Our Vision, Goals and Priorities for the Homelessness Service System	8
Goal 1: End chronic homelessness in York Region.....	9
Goal 2: Strengthen York Region’s human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness.....	10
Background	12
2014 to 2024 Accomplishments	16
Consultation and Community Planning	21
Context	22
System Pressures.....	25
Looking Ahead: Forecasted Growth in Homelessness in York Region.....	30
Feedback from Community Consultations and Research	32
Moving Our Priorities Forward for 2024 to 2027	42
Priority Area 1: Prevention and Diversion.....	43
Priority Area 2: Intervention and Housing Stability.....	45
Priority Area 3: Systems Response.....	49
Priority Area 4: Advocacy and Engagement.....	52
Accountability Methods.....	54
Conclusion	57
References and Selected Further Reading	59
Appendix A: Common Terms and Definitions	60
Appendix B: Homelessness Programs and Services.....	62
Appendix C: Implementation Plan	65

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.
Please contact 1-877-464-9675.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Homelessness Service System Plan (the System Plan) was developed with the contributions of regional, local municipal, and community agency staff, including many people who provide direct support to people experiencing homelessness. They took time to share their current challenges and ideas.

The Region also thanks the many people with lived and living experience of homelessness who shared their stories. This plan has been shaped by people’s experiences. They have given ideas and hopes for how efforts can better help prevent and end homelessness.

Over the course of the System Plan, the Region will continue to engage with community partners and people with lived experience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF HOMELESSNESS IN YORK REGION

Demand for homelessness services in York Region has increased significantly in recent years. Existing emergency and transitional housing programs consistently operate at or near capacity. The need for supports to help people without a home or at risk of losing it continues to increase. Detailed demand informed forecasting completed in 2023 found that without additional services and supports and improved access to housing affordable to people with low incomes, the number of people experiencing homelessness in York Region will grow from 1,300 as of September 30, 2023¹ to between 2,100 and 2,300 by 2030. The current large increases in the numbers of people living unsheltered and unsustainable pressures on the emergency and transitional housing system are an ongoing trend. The challenge to the Region and its partners is to work together to help people keep their homes and at the same time, help people who do experience homelessness to find housing swiftly, stay safe and healthy, and get support to stabilize over the long term.

The **2024 to 2027 York Region Homelessness Service System Plan (the System Plan)** identifies a vision, goals and priority areas to prevent and reduce homelessness in York Region.

Through this System Plan, York Region aims to build an effective, coordinated, and responsive Homelessness Service System that aligns the work of many different partners to prevent and end homelessness.

THE SYSTEM PLAN IS GUIDED BY TWO ASPIRATIONAL GOALS:

GOAL 1

End Chronic Homelessness in York Region

GOAL 2

Strengthen York Region's Human Rights-Based Approach to Addressing Homelessness



“They do a good job motivating you as well as supporting you here [Emergency Housing site]. They’ll help you with stuff like making your resume.”

(Lived Experience Focus Group Participant)

As homelessness impacts all of the Region’s unique communities, a collaborative approach is required to prevent, reduce and eventually end homelessness in York Region. It is by working together as one community that the homelessness response can be delivered with compassion and a coordinated effort.



PRIORITY 1

Prevention and Diversion

PRIORITY 2

Intervention and Housing Stability

PRIORITY 3

Systems Response

PRIORITY 4

Advocacy and Engagement

FROM 2024 TO 2027, THE KEY PRIORITIES IN THE PLAN ARE:

- Enhancing **Prevention and Diversion** services that help people stay housed or return to stable housing as quickly as possible
- Delivering **Intervention and Housing Stability** supports that meet the needs for safety, shelter, and food of people who experience homelessness and help people obtain housing and connect with longer-term housing stabilization programs
- Building a **Systems Response**, working collaboratively with partners across the service system to connect people to appropriate and effective supports
- Strengthening York Region’s **Advocacy and Engagement** with other levels of government to address service system gaps, in partnership with the community

The System Plan sets out actions the Region will take to achieve these goals and priorities, working with all levels of government, community-based agencies, and many other partners.

¹ At the time the forecast was completed, data was available up to September 30, 2023. As of December 31, 2023, 1,784 unique individuals were known to have experienced homelessness in York Region in 2023.

OUR VISION, GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM:

York Region's vision is an **effective, coordinated** and **responsive** Homelessness Service System that aligns the work of many different partners to **prevent and end homelessness**.

Across Canada, the number of people experiencing homelessness is increasing, and demand for services is growing rapidly.

York Region is not immune to this growing challenge. While the expansion of services and supports over the past 10 years has been critical to responding to homelessness in York Region, existing programs funded by the Region operate at or near full capacity as the depth of need has continued to increase at a faster rate. High rents and low vacancy rates mean it is nearly impossible for many people who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness to find and keep housing in York Region without ongoing support.

Effectively preventing and ending homelessness

requires tailored, individualized services and collaboration across different sectors and levels of government. It also requires senior levels of government to focus on investments and policies that address structural challenges, such as supporting housing affordability, increasing social assistance, and improving access to employment, health and mental health and additional supports.

The System Plan identifies a vision, goals, and priority areas. It sets out actions and milestones that the Region, together with community partners, will take to improve and enhance the collective response to homelessness. The System Plan also includes performance measures that will enable the Region to track progress.

Housing is a key social determinant of health

“Adequate housing is essential to one's sense of dignity, safety, inclusion and ability to contribute to the fabric of our neighbourhoods and societies... Without appropriate housing it is often not possible to get and keep employment, to recover from mental illness or other disabilities, to integrate into the community, to escape physical or emotional violence or to keep custody of children.”²

² Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2008). Right at home: Report on the consultation on human rights and rental housing in Ontario.

THE SYSTEM PLAN IS GUIDED BY TWO ASPIRATIONAL GOALS:

GOAL 1

End Chronic Homelessness in York Region

Chronic homelessness describes people who have been experiencing homelessness for six months or longer in the past year, or people who have experienced homelessness for more than 18 months in the past three years. See Appendix A for common terms and definitions.

Ending chronic homelessness is a long-term goal that can be achieved through a shared focus on preventing people who are at risk of homelessness from losing their housing, and by helping people who experience homelessness to quickly access supports and services to stabilize and regain housing.

Ending chronic homelessness can help free up essential system capacity, including emergency housing. For example, in 2023, the top 40 people with the longest stays (six months or longer) in emergency housing accounted for 16% of total capacity usage in the system.

To end chronic homelessness, the Region will work with partners to:

- Prioritize prevention to keep people from losing their housing in the first place
- Support people who experience homelessness to obtain stable housing as quickly as possible
- Invest in housing retention and wraparound supports to ensure people remain housed, including effective high-support programs that use a Housing First approach



Housing First Approach

Housing First is a service model targeted at people who have complex needs and barriers in their experience with chronic homelessness. The key principles include immediate access to housing with no pre-conditions, choice and self-determination, recovery orientation (including harm reduction), individualized and person-driven supports, and social and community integration.³

Communities that have put the Housing First approach into practice have seen significant reductions in homelessness. Finland, which set a goal in 1987 to end all homelessness, adopted a plan based on Housing First principles in 2008. People experiencing homelessness are provided with immediate access to housing without preconditions,

with subsidized rent and other supports if required. As a result of this approach, the number of shelter beds in Helsinki dropped from 2,121 in 1985 to 52 in 2016, while the number of supportive housing units and rental units for people who had experienced homelessness increased from fewer than 200 to more than 3,700.⁴

The Housing First approach is more cost-effective than long-term emergency shelter use. It is also better for the person and the community.⁵

Across Canada, communities including Toronto, Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Kingston, Edmonton and Calgary have made Housing First a key pillar of their approaches to ending homelessness.

³ Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., Nelson, G., MacNaughton, E., Streiner, D., & Aubry, T. (2014). [National At Home/Chez Soi Final Report](#). Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada.

⁴ Lester, P. (2023, July 11). [Eradicating Homelessness in Finland](#). Retrieved from Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research.

⁵ Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., Nelson, G., MacNaughton, E., Streiner, D., & Aubry, T. (2014). [National At Home/Chez Soi Final Report](#). Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada.

GOAL 2

Strengthen York Region's Human Rights-Based Approach to Addressing Homelessness

Strengthening the human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness will help develop a service system that is equitable and responsive to the diverse needs of York Region's communities.

To realize this goal, York Region will continue to work with partners to:

- Deliver supports and services that respect and reflect the personal rights and dignity of the people who need them, and each person's unique needs and goals, in alignment with the recommendations of the Federal Housing Advocate

- Ensure support services are equitably provided to people
- Focus the response to encampments and unsheltered homelessness on helping to connect people to appropriate housing and support services
- Meaningfully engage people with lived experience of homelessness in the development of programs and services



Encampments and Human Rights

Communities across Canada, including York Region, have seen increasing numbers of people living in tents and sleeping rough in parks, ravines and other outdoor locations. This can create risks to their safety, and lead to conflict over the use of public spaces.

Recent Court rulings related to encampments in Waterloo and Kingston continue to support the goal of strengthening the human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness through working collaboratively with communities, service providers, and other partners to support those who may be living unsheltered to have a safe and secure place to stay.

York Region's community response to encampments focuses on helping people who are unsheltered and/or living in encampments to connect with housing and support services as quickly as possible. This aligns with the recommendations of the [Federal Housing Advocate's review of encampments](#)⁶, which calls for municipal governments to develop a human rights-based policy related to encampments that prioritizes upholding the human dignity of these residents, and ensure that relevant by-laws, policies, programs and plans include meaningful engagement with people with lived experience in encampments.

⁶ Office of the Federal Housing Advocate. (2024). Upholding dignity and human rights: the Federal Housing Advocate's review of homeless encampments - Final report. Ottawa: The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate.

FOUR PRIORITY AREAS FOCUS ACTIONS WITHIN THE SYSTEM PLAN

Activities within the System Plan are organized under four Priority Areas that support the aspirational goals.

Each Priority Area has objectives, activities and milestones that will help guide the work of the Region and its partners over the next four years.



PRIORITY 1 Prevention and Diversion

Prevention and Diversion: Preventing homelessness means helping people stay housed or return to stable housing as quickly as possible. Diversion involves helping people find alternatives to emergency housing and connecting them with support to return to stable housing. Taking action to prevent homelessness reduces the stress, stigma, trauma and isolation that can result when someone experiences homelessness.



PRIORITY 2 Intervention and Housing Stability

Intervention and Housing Stability: Programs and services that help people experiencing homelessness meet their immediate needs for safety, shelter, and food, and provide supports to help them obtain housing and/or connect with longer-term resources to remain stably housed are critical to ending homelessness.



PRIORITY 3 System Response

System Response: Preventing, reducing and ending homelessness calls for a whole of community response in which the Region and partners work seamlessly across different programs, agencies and sectors to connect people to the right supports at the right time. The Region will continue to work with partners to plan and deliver an integrated system that is person-centred, housing-focused, collaborative, and data-driven.



PRIORITY 4 Advocacy and Engagement

Advocacy and Engagement: Advocating and engaging with other levels of government is essential to respond to service system gaps and structural issues that can only be addressed by the Federal and Provincial governments. Leveraging community voices in advocating for greater action from other levels of government will support a whole of community response to homelessness.

Background

York Region is one of 47 Service Managers across Ontario responsible for funding, planning, implementing, delivering and administering housing and homelessness programs and services as required by the provincial *Housing Services Act, 2011*. Key responsibilities include:

Responsibilities in Legislation and Provincial Guidelines

- Local system planning
- Policy and program development
- Administering provincial funding and managing services delivered in partnership with community agencies
- Maintaining a By-Name List of people experiencing homelessness

Other Areas of Service

- Direct service delivery, including Outreach Services and homelessness prevention assistance
- Funding an Emergency Housing Central Intake Line (EHCIL)
- Administering a centralized database for all homelessness data collection and reporting requirements
- Training and capacity building for community partners

A KEY COMPONENT OF THE 10-YEAR HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN

York Region’s current 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, [Housing Solutions](#), aims to help people find and keep housing, increase the supply of affordable and rental housing, and strengthen the entire system of supports.

The System Plan builds on the work that began through Housing Solutions. It is one of three implementation plans, each targeted toward a different segment of the housing continuum, that will inform the Priority Areas and Goals of the next 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.



By-Name Lists

A By-Name List counts the number of unique individuals who experience homelessness on at least one day each month. It provides real-time data to support coordinated access and set priorities for helping individuals and families. People are added to the list (inflow) when they begin accessing homelessness services, and are removed from the list (outflow) if they obtain housing or stop accessing services. At a system level it shows overall homeless inflow and outflow, making it valuable for assessing system performance and providing evidence of needs.

Roles and Responsibilities in the Homelessness Sector

While York Region plays a significant role in funding and managing the Homelessness Service System, many other partners also have key roles and responsibilities.

FEDERAL

- The National Housing Strategy is Canada’s 10-year \$82+ billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call home
- Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy provides funding to Indigenous, urban, rural and remote communities to address their homelessness needs.
- Provides Capital Funding through grants and loans
- Oversees Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides funding to Service Managers and community agencies to provide shelter and support services for asylum seekers and refugee claimants

Goal:
Reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027/2028

PROVINCIAL

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

- Provides oversight and policy direction of housing and homelessness services under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*
- The Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program (PHPP) funds Service Managers to provide housing and support services for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Requires Service Managers to maintain a By-Name List, a real-time list of people experiencing homelessness
- Provides funding to Service Managers and community agencies to support asylum seekers and refugee claimants

Ministry of Health

- Provides funding for health-oriented programs delivered by Service Managers including mental health and addictions
- Funds and administers supportive housing, including for adults with mental health needs

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

- Provides funding to municipal Service Managers to deliver programs including Social Assistance
- Provides funding and oversight for Violence Against Women shelters
- Funds and administers supportive housing for adults with developmental disabilities

Goal:
Prevent and address homelessness; reduce chronic homelessness

UNITED WAY GREATER TORONTO

- The federally designated community entity for York Region, receives and flows federal funding to community service providers
- York Region partners with United Way Greater Toronto to prevent and respond to homelessness

LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Funded by all levels of government to deliver front-line programs and services
- York Region partners with community service providers to deliver programs and services to prevent, respond and reduce homelessness

LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

- Key partners in planning and improving homelessness services and supports in York Region
- Work collaboratively with the Region to address homelessness
- Work in partnership with the Region to support people who are living unsheltered/in encampments as part of administration of by-laws that govern use of municipal public property

HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM

The service system in York Region aims to provide people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness with immediate access to support services that focus on housing and longer-term stabilization. A detailed overview of programs and services is provided in Appendix B.

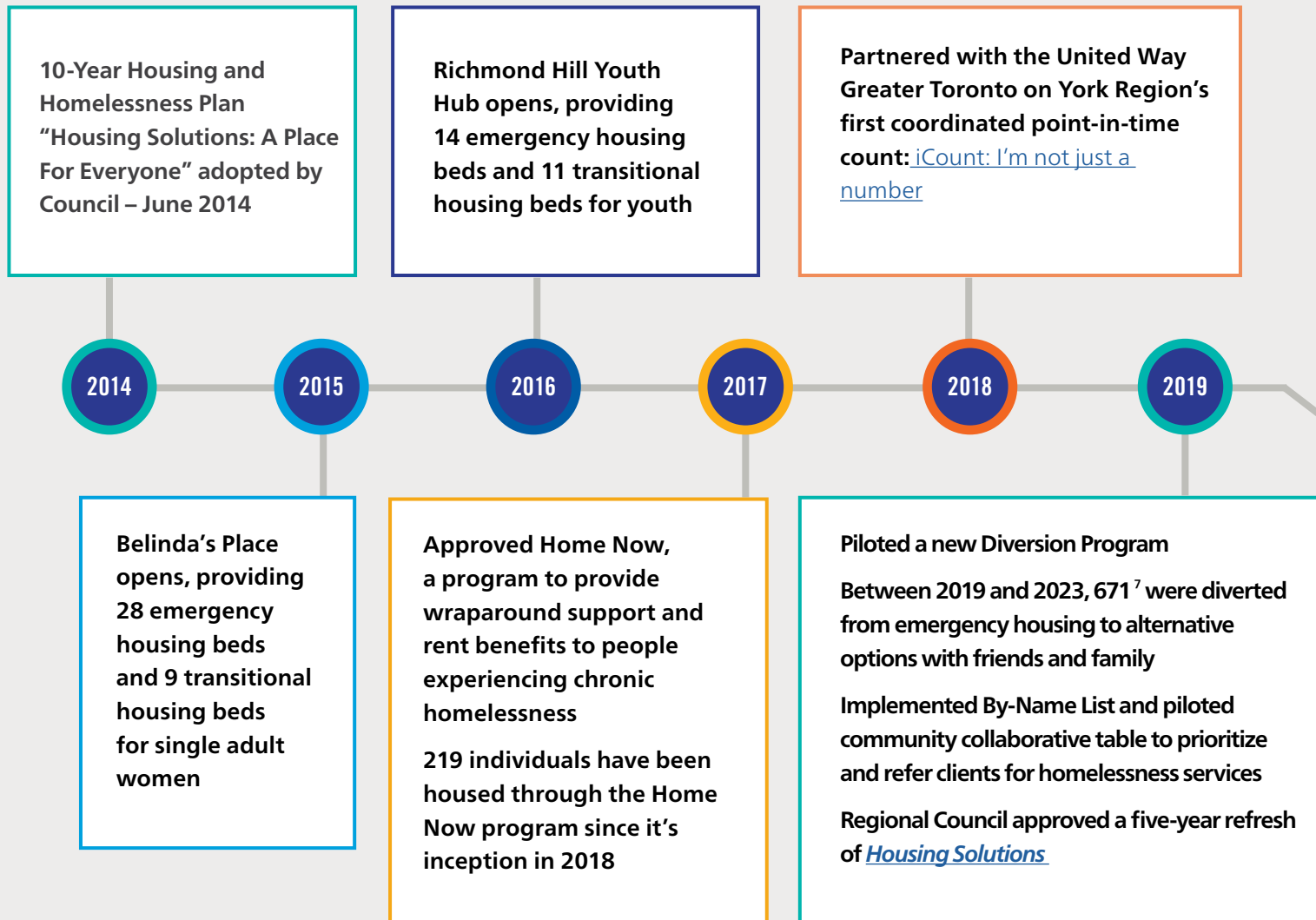
Key roles of the Homelessness Service System in York Region are to provide:

- Prevention programs, including financial assistance to help people who are at risk of homelessness retain their housing
- Outreach services for people who are unsheltered and/or living in encampments, with a focus on connecting these individuals to more appropriate shelter and support services

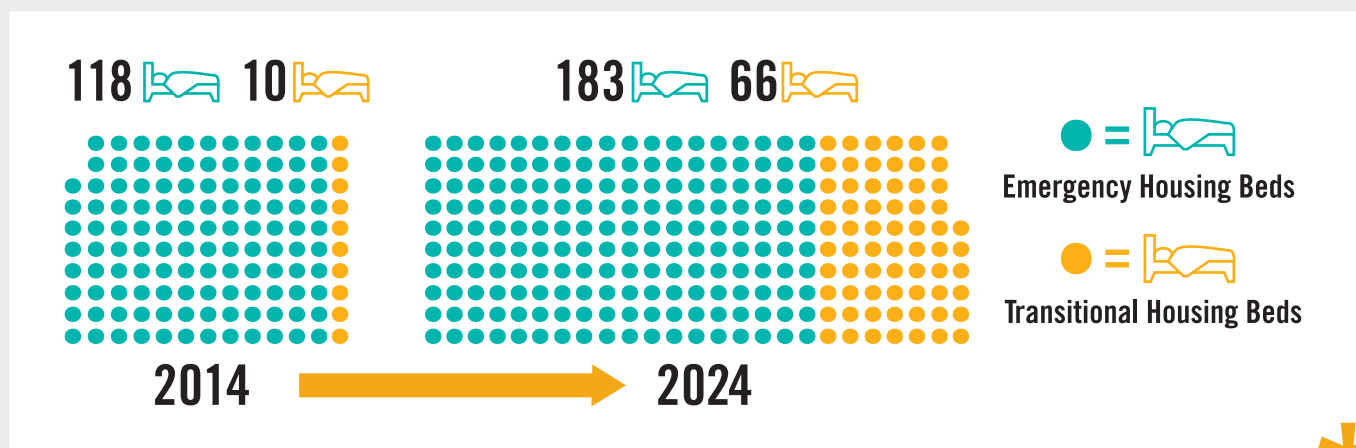
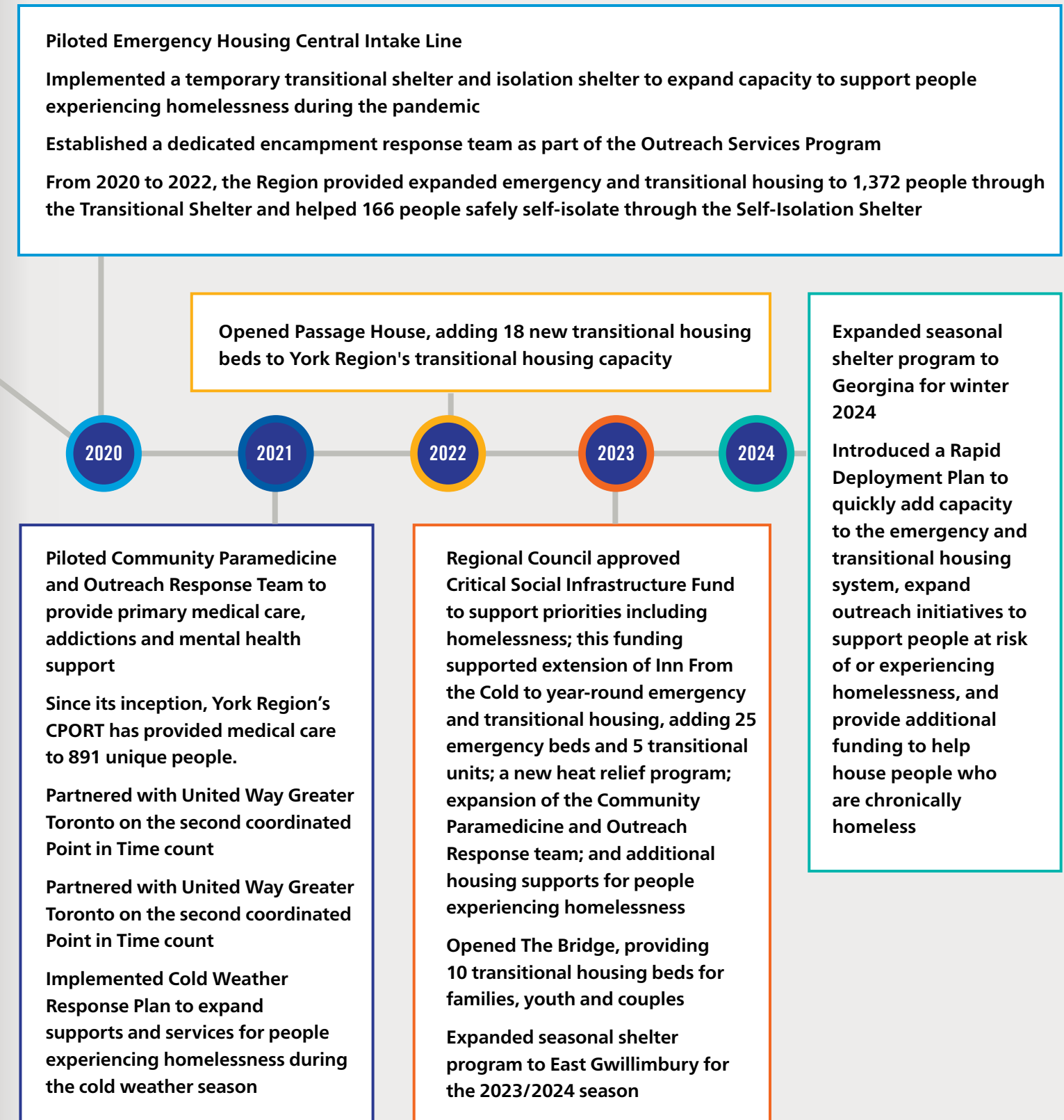
- Emergency programs that provide a short-term place to stay (intended for up to 30 days) and access to support services, including assistance to find longer term housing, for people who are experiencing homelessness
- Housing support programs that combine a rent subsidy with case management and service system navigation. These programs can be temporary (such as Transitional Housing) or ongoing (such as programs that use a Housing First approach)
- Case management, service system navigation and referrals to help people connect to other community services and resources to stabilize their lives

2014 to 2024 Accomplishments

EVOLUTION OF YORK REGION'S HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM



Between approximately 2014 and early 2024, York Region and its partners worked collaboratively to develop a data-driven and outcome-focused homelessness service system to help people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and keep housing.



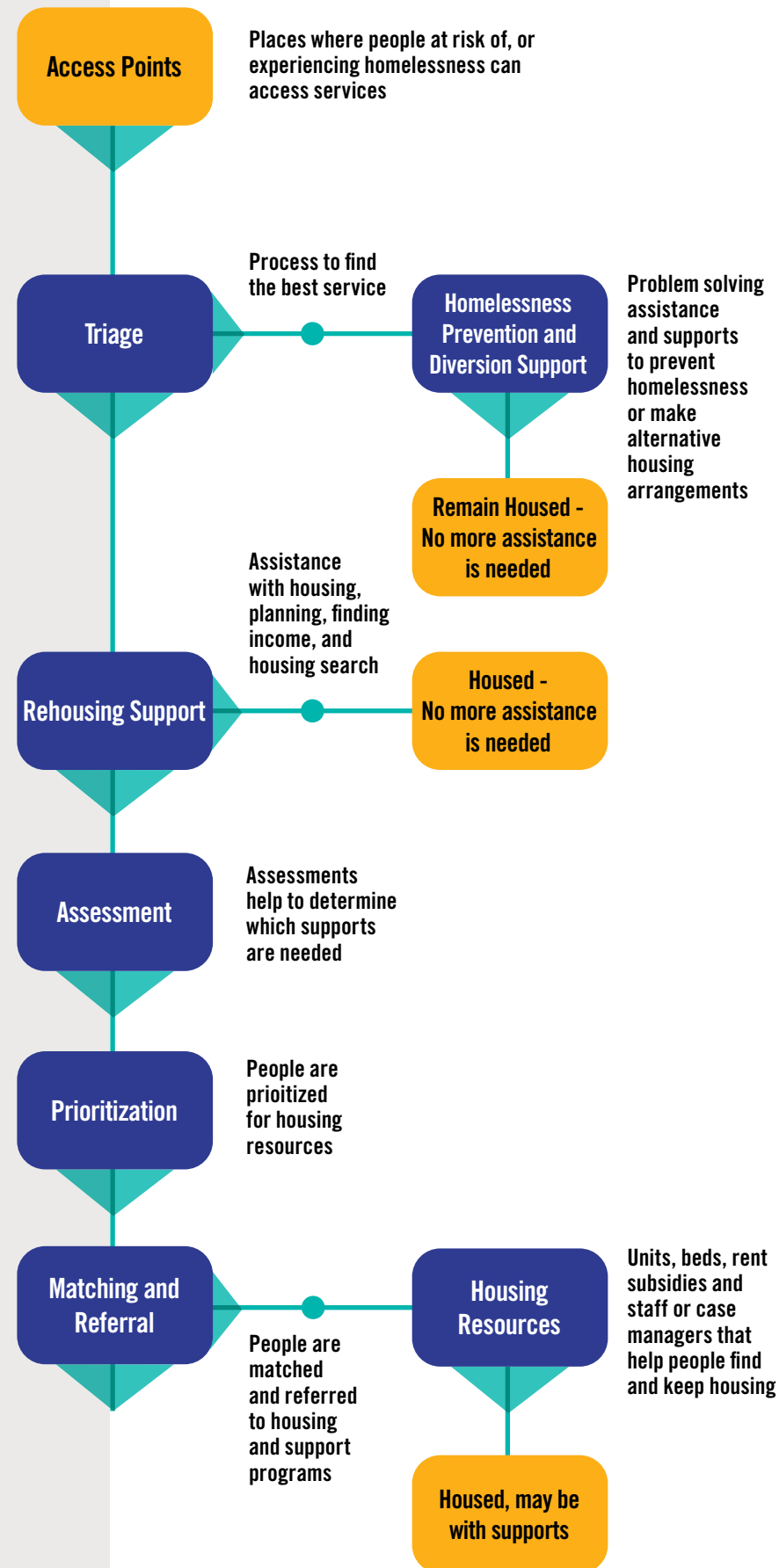
⁷ This number may not be unique as people may have been diverted in more than one year between 2019 and 2023

COORDINATED ACCESS: PUTTING THE SYSTEMS RESPONSE INTO PRACTICE

York Region and United Way Greater Toronto have worked and continue to work together to create a Coordinated Access System to connect people experiencing homelessness with housing and support. United Way Greater Toronto is the designated lead (referred to as the Community Entity) for the federal funding program called Reaching Home.

As Service Manager, the Region has been developing and implementing elements of Coordinated Access over the past few years. Key activities include establishing a By-Name List and a Community Collaborative Table.

The United Way and York Region are now collaborating to develop a framework, protocols and tools to formalize the key components of Coordinated Access across York Region. The first phase of this work was completed in July 2023. Coordinated Access is a critical component in the systems response to homelessness.



EMERGENCY/ TRANSITIONAL, SEASONAL AND DROP-IN HOUSING SITES

LEGEND

- Emergency/Transitional Housing
- Seasonal Shelters
- Drop-In Locations



Consultation and Community Planning

York Region's Homelessness Service System Plan is informed by research, data analysis and forecasting, and community consultation.

Preliminary consultations and research to develop the Homelessness Service System Plan began in 2023, including interviews with key community leaders, local municipal and regional staff, and presentations to community tables including the Human Services Planning Board and helped refine the System Plan's scope and shape the goals and priority areas. Through this work, the Region identified the two aspirational goals and three

initial Priority Areas: Prevention and Diversion, Housing Stability and Intervention, and Systems Response.

A jurisdictional scan that included other Greater Toronto Area municipalities and Canadian cities (Kingston, London, Waterloo, Hamilton, Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary) as well as some international examples provided insight into best practices and strategies and identified that many communities have shared goals to reduce or end chronic homelessness.

Service Managers across Ontario are developing formalized encampment protocols

As unsheltered homelessness increases across Ontario, Service Managers and communities are developing dedicated encampment response frameworks or protocols. Encampment response protocols aim to align municipal and community agency actions in helping people living unsheltered access housing resources and, if there is planned enforcement, accountable processes for what actions will be taken and how people who are being displaced will be helped. Communication is key to ensuring that people living unsheltered understand the resources and safe accommodations that are available.

On November 23, 2023, York Region held a [Special Council Meeting](#) to share information about the growing challenges of homelessness in York Region and actions being taken to address this problem, introduce the proposed Goals and Priority Areas, and to continue the engagement and consultation activities in support of the Homelessness Service System Plan.



CONSULTATION GROUPS

Through continued engagement in the first quarter of 2024, the Region used the two aspirational Goals and three proposed Priority Areas to explore community needs and gaps and challenges in the service system and identify key actions to support the vision. Feedback received during this phase validated the Goals and Priority Areas, and a fourth Priority Area, Advocacy and Engagement, was also identified.

Municipal staff engagement through a virtual roundtable included York Regional Police, fire services, York Region Transit, library staff, by-law staff, parks and recreation staff.

Consistent with the goal of taking a human rights approach, York Region also held six focus groups to hear directly from people with lived experience of homelessness in York Region. Staff visited emergency and transitional housing locations in York Region, including Porter Place, Inn From the Cold, Sutton Youth Services, Belinda's Place, the Richmond Hill Youth Hub, and the Richmond Hill Drop-In. These participants provided critical insight into the Homelessness Service System, and how it must change to better meet their needs and the community's needs.



Engagement with **leaders** of agencies and organizations



Engaged with interested members of **Regional Council** and a number of local councillors



Presentations to **2 local municipal councils**



6 focus groups with people with lived experience



2 virtual roundtables with staff from local municipalities and frontline agencies

Additional consultations with internal and community leadership tables included:



Community and Health Services Policy Managers Table



Human Services Planning Board



York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

Context

The high cost of housing is a challenge for many York Region residents

Homelessness has emerged as a challenge across Ontario and in York Region against a backdrop of significant increases in housing costs, limited supply of rental housing, and low vacancy rates. Despite high median and average income levels, income inequality is a growing concern, especially as house prices and rent as well as other costs of living continue to rise more quickly than incomes.

The 2021 Census Release Report on Housing showed that across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, York Region had the highest proportion of owners and the highest proportion of renters spending 30% or more of their gross income on housing costs. For individual households, spending a higher percentage of income on housing costs is associated with an increased risk of homelessness, particularly for people with fixed incomes or receiving social assistance.^{8,9}

Homelessness is Driven by Structural Factors Including Housing Costs

Homelessness is the result of a combination of structural issues, particularly housing markets characterized by high costs and low vacancy rates, and individual life events like the loss of a job, a divorce or an eviction notice. When housing is scarce and expensive, people facing other barriers, including low income, mental illness, addiction or interpersonal conflict are more likely to experience homelessness, and to have a harder time regaining housing.¹⁰

HOUSING IN YORK REGION IS UNAFFORDABLE FOR MANY



Between 2019 and 2023, average resale home prices in York Region increased by 43% and the average resale home price is now over \$1.3 million¹¹



Limited supply of purpose-built rental units has pushed the average 2023 monthly rent in York Region to \$1,664¹²



Vacancy rates for purpose-built rentals in York Region averaged 1.9% in 2023¹³



When comparing March 2018 to March 2024, the number of York Region residents receiving Ontario Works benefits increased by 81% from 10,635 to 19,287



A single person on Ontario Works receives a total of \$733 a month, \$343 to cover basic needs and \$390 for housing. This rate is set by the province and has not changed since 2018



In York Region, a room in shared housing costs between \$800 and \$1,000 a month¹⁴

⁸ 2021 Census Release Report: Housing.

⁹ Kneebone, R., & Wilkins, M. (2022). Policy Brief 15:22: Income support, inflation and homelessness. Calgary: University of Calgary School of Public Policy

¹⁰ Colborn, G., & Aldern, C. (2023). Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain US Housing Patterns. University of California Press.

¹¹ Housing Solutions: A Place For Everyone 2023 Progress Report


¹² Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Rental Market Survey Data Tables, 2018-2023

¹³ CMHC Rental Market Survey Data Tables, 2018-2023.

¹⁴ Homelessness in York Region: Memorandum to Members of Committee of the Whole. June 2023. Retrieved from <https://yorkpublishing.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=40680> March 9, 2024.

MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INCOME, HOUSING INSTABILITY AND FOOD INSECURITY

Although people with the lowest incomes, including people receiving social assistance, face some of the most significant barriers to finding and keeping housing and affording other necessities, many people who are fully employed, as well as seniors on fixed incomes, are also challenged by the cost of living, and may be at greater risk of experiencing housing instability or homelessness.

MEDIAN INCOME: \$50K 
for people who work in truck transportation, manufacturing, food and retail services, and health care supports

The 2021 Census reports in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area that:

50%  **TWO PARENT FAMILY HOUSEHOLD WITH CHILDREN AT OR BELOW \$51.6K**¹⁵

The living wage as calculated by the Ontario Living Wage Network, which uses a geographic area comparable to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, is a calculation of what each adult in a household must earn to cover necessities including housing, food and transportation for their family type. The living wage is heavily impacted by high housing costs. In York Region, an individual must earn a living wage of \$25.05 (approximately \$50,000 per year), up from \$23.15 in 2022.¹⁶

Many people who have low or inadequate income will also experience food insecurity, which is linked to poor mental and physical health including heart disease, poor dental health and depression, as well as hyperactivity, asthma, and depression later in life, in children and youth.

For a single parent household with two children receiving assistance from either Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works, benefits will not be able to cover the cost of rent and food.¹⁷

 **SENIOR**
LIVING ON OLD AGE SECURITY/
GUARANTEED INCOME SPENDS
85% OF INCOME ON RENT/FOOD

Housing instability and food insecurity both stem from lack of adequate income, and people may be forced to choose between eating enough or keeping a roof over their heads.

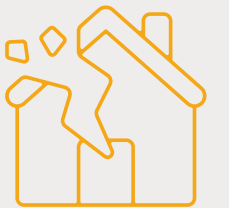
System Pressures

The number of people who are active on the Region's By-Names List, an indicator of the number of unique individuals who are known to be experiencing homelessness, is growing.¹⁸

- In 2019, 1,395 unique individuals experienced homelessness and were added to the By-Name List; this number increased by 28% to 1,784 unique individuals in 2023.
- When comparing December 2022 to December 2023, the number of individuals on the By-Name List grew from 552 to 848, a 54% increase.¹⁹

It is estimated that an estimated that 80% of homelessness is "hidden," which means almost 9,000 people may have experienced homelessness in York Region in 2023.

Most Homelessness is "Hidden" Homelessness²⁰



For many people, the word "homeless" is associated with a stereotypical image, but homelessness is experienced differently depending on a person's location, identity, and personal history.

Only an estimated 20% of people experiencing homelessness are **visible** on the streets or in shelters. The vast majority are **invisible** or **hidden**: they may be moving from one friend's couch to another, living short-term with family, or coping in an unsafe environment that is not a home.

Hidden homelessness overlaps with **unsheltered** homelessness, which includes people who are sleeping rough or living in a tent, sometimes in an encampment, or living in a car. Locating and helping these people can be challenging. It requires empathy, problem-solving skills, and collaboration.

People in **different population groups**, such as youth, women, families and newcomers to Canada have very different needs and concerns. They may require targeted supports in addition to help in finding housing.

¹⁵ Ontario Living Wage Network, 2023.

¹⁶ Income Explorer, 2021 Census.

¹⁷ York Region Public Health's 2023 Nutritious Food Basket

¹⁸ Please note that as people receive supports and leave the By-Name List, other individuals in urgent need are constantly and consistently being added to the list.

¹⁹ Data source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), v4, as of January 25, 2024. Data reflect the number

of unique people experiencing homelessness for at least one day during the calendar month (December 2022 and December 2023), as documented in HIFIS. The data exclude people who are experiencing homelessness in York Region but who are not documented in HIFIS. People who experience homelessness in more than one month are counted in each month they experience homelessness.

²⁰ Ontario Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness. (2015). A Place to Call Home. Toronto: Province of Ontario.

KEY BY-NAME LIST STATISTICS FOR 2023:

The chart below outlines the journey of people who were active on the By-Name List in 2023, including inflow (people who become active on the By-Name List) and outflow (people who are housed and people who become inactive for other reasons). While just under one quarter of these individuals obtained housing, nearly 19% were still experiencing homelessness and accessing services at the end of the year, and many more stopped accessing services, their outcomes unknown. By the end of the year, more than 10% (222 individuals) met the definition of chronic homelessness.

OUTCOME	2019		2023	
	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	PER CENT OF THE TOTAL	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	PER CENT OF THE TOTAL
Chronically homeless	86	6.2%	222	12.4%
Deceased	N/A	N/A	8	0.4%
Homeless	364	26.1%	336	18.8%
Housed	190	13.6%	420	23.5%
Inactive/Unknown	547	39.2%	752	42.2%
Transitional housing	208	14.9%	46	2.6%
GRAND TOTAL	1395	100%	1,784	100%

Source: HIFIS, v4

EMERGENCY AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS ARE OPERATING AT CAPACITY



- Average **length of stay** in emergency housing almost **doubled** from 2019 to 2023 increasing from 26.5 to 49.3 days.
- **Families spend more than two months** (on average) in emergency housing (85 days in 2023).
- Individuals spend an **average of 33 days** in emergency housing.
- The number of people moving from emergency housing to long-term housing dropped between 2019 (446) and 2023 (224).

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AND UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS IS ALSO INCREASING IN YORK REGION



The Region began systematically monitoring encampments in 2020, and the Outreach Program has expanded to include a dedicated encampment team to support people who are unsheltered.

- Estimated number of **people experiencing chronic homelessness almost quadrupled** between 2019 to 2023, to total an estimated 473 people.
- The number of **known encampment locations** visited **increased** by approximately three times between 2021 (62 locations) and 2023 (204 locations).

Homelessness has significant, long-lasting impacts on health and well-being

People experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of physical and mental health issues, and the proportion of people who report addictions or substance use, increases as they experience homelessness for longer periods of time.²¹ When a person experiences homelessness, their health may be directly affected by physical conditions such as crowded shelters and exposure to extreme weather. Difficulty in accessing medications, following recommended care, and obtaining treatment increase the risk for adverse health outcomes, and people who experience homelessness may be more likely to use emergency rooms.²² People who are experiencing homelessness have a greater risk of death compared with housed people of the same age and similar socioeconomic status.^{23,24}

²¹ Report on addiction, substance use and homelessness. Infrastructure Canada

²² Public Health Ontario. (2019). Homelessness and Health Outcomes: What are the associations? Toronto: Province of Ontario.

²³ Meyer, B. D., Wyse, A., & Logani, I. (2023). Working paper 31843: Life and Death at the Margins of Society: The Mortality of the US Homeless Population. National Bureau of Economic Research.

²⁴ Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (n.d.). Chronic Illness/Disease and Mortality. Retrieved from Homeless Hub.

LASTING IMPACTS

- Some studies in various Canadian cities have indicated that **between 23% and 67%** of people experiencing homelessness may have **mental illness**²⁵
- York Region's 2021 Point-in-Time Count found that rates of **mental health issues** among surveyed people experiencing homelessness **increased** from 48% in 2018 to 64% in 2021
- Among the 192 people who completed the 2021 I Count survey:
 - 39% (74 respondents) self-reported an **illness or medical condition**
 - 64% (122 respondents) self-reported a **mental health condition**
 - 48% (92 respondents) self-reported a **substance use issues**

Financial assistance is increasingly inadequate or unavailable to help people keep their housing.

- The average amount of financial assistance provided through the Housing Stability Program increased by 74% from \$645 in 2019 to \$1,123 in 2023, and increased by over 60% in the Homelessness Prevention Program from \$1,601 in 2019 to \$2,583 in 2023²⁶
- In 2023, 163 applications for the Housing Stability Program were **deemed ineligible** because applicants **could not find housing** they would be able to sustain without ongoing financial assistance

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) assists people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness find and keep permanent housing. York Region has received funding under the COHB program since it launched in 2020. Provincial allocations were enhanced in fall 2023 to address the housing needs of priority populations, including asylum seekers and people experiencing homelessness. Additional spaces provided under this enhancement were full by December 2023, and no new COHB program spaces are available until the provincial government confirms the Region's allocation for 2024-25. Funding amounts have not been consistent, with multi-year allocations unknown in advance, including the allocation for the 2024-25 program year. This makes planning difficult. COHB is currently funded until March 31, 2029 with no guarantee it could be extended further.

- Households **enrolled in the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit** not receiving social assistance currently **receive** on average **\$860** per month to **help pay rent**
- Households **receiving Ontario Works** enrolled in the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit currently receive about **\$950** per month

²⁵ Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (n.d.). Chronic Illness/Disease and Mortality. Retrieved from Homeless Hub.

²⁶ The Housing Stability Program and Homelessness Prevention Program provide one-time financial assistance for costs such as rent or utility arrears or last month's rent, to help people retain their housing. See Appendix B for more information.

Demand for programs that provide services including social work support, case management and service referrals to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness has increased significantly since 2019.²⁷

- The Integrated Support Program caseload grew from 663 to 788 between 2019 and 2023. Staff report that an **increasing share of their time** with clients is **spent on their housing needs**²⁸
- The Outreach Services Program supported **730 people** in 2023, an **increase of almost 80%** from 408 in 2019²⁹
- The Community Paramedicine and Outreach Response Team (CPORT)³⁰ supported almost **900 people** between September 2022 and the present. In 2023:
 - **505 unique clients** were provided with **direct care** through the CPORT program, including **83 living in encampments**
 - **128 people** were provided with **follow-up care** after placing a 911 call
 - **1,741 unique visits/interactions** were completed by the CPORT program in various locations, including encampments

²⁷ More information about these programs is included in Appendix B.

²⁸ The Integrated Support Program provides social work support for people with complex needs.

²⁹ The Outreach Services Program provides short-term intensive case management, service navigation and referrals to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including a dedicated team to support those living unsheltered/in encampments.

³⁰ CPORT is a partnership between the Outreach Program, Community Paramedicine and community doctors to provide access to primary care, mental health and substance use support, and social supports.

Looking Ahead: Forecasted Growth in Homelessness in York Region

Forecasting in the area of homelessness is relatively new.

To develop a forecast of homelessness for York Region, the Region worked with a consultant that uses artificial intelligence, mapping and data visualization tools to analyze multiple datasets and trends and develop a forecast for system need, drawing on census data, data on shelter use and homelessness services from the Region’s Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), and other Regional datasets.

The forecast indicated that based on current growth trajectory, if no additional action is taken, the number of people in York Region experiencing homelessness annually will reach between 2,100 and 2,300 by 2030, compared to 1,300 people between January and September 2023.

Using a combination of York Region data and best practices and assumptions where data was not available, the forecasting exercise identified that the Region needs to make significant investments in services for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, both to close the gap between the level of need and current service system capacity and to respond to anticipated growth.

Table 1 summarizes the estimated capacity increases required in some key programs to respond to all people who experience homelessness in York Region and account for projected population growth by 2033.

TABLE 1: FORECASTED INCREASES IN CAPACITY REQUIRED TO MEET PROJECTED 2033 DEMAND FOR KEY SERVICES

SERVICE TYPE	CURRENT CAPACITY	CAPACITY INCREASE BY 2023
Emergency Housing	183 beds	300 beds
Transitional Housing	66 units	350 units
Scattered Site Housing with Support Services ³¹	126 spaces	500 spaces

³¹ Scattered site housing with support services includes the Region’s existing Home Now program, which provides a rent subsidy and intensive case management for people who have complex needs and have experienced chronic homelessness.

The forecast also identified:

The Region will need to approximately quadruple the caseload capacity in programs that provide case management support such as the Outreach Services Program and Diversion Program, double the capacity in prevention programs that provide short-term financial assistance such as Housing Stability Program and Homelessness Prevention Program, and invest in affordable housing and portable subsidies for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Over the four years of the System Plan, the Region will continue to explore and enhance the use of forecasting and work to refine and validate these projections to support effective service planning.

Changes in the Population Experiencing Homelessness in York Region



- **Age:** The average age of people accessing homelessness services rose from 34 years in 2019 to 46 years in 2023.
- **Gender:** The share of women accessing services increased from 33% in 2019 to 38% in 2023.
- **Indigenous identity:** Indigenous people are significantly overrepresented among those accessing the homelessness service system, at 6% of people experiencing homelessness but only 0.5% of the total York Region population. This over-representation is consistent with findings from the [2021](#) and [2018](#) Point in Time Counts.
- **Black identity:** the 2018 and 2021 Point in Time Counts also found Black peoples were over-represented among people experiencing homelessness in York Region, at 10% of people experiencing homelessness, despite representing just 2.5% of the total York Region population.

Feedback from Community Consultations and Research

PRIORITY 1

Prevention and Diversion

The experience of losing housing is traumatic and can have long-term impacts on a person's wellbeing. Prevention is a critical component of an integrated homelessness system. Helping people to stay housed, or return to stable housing as quickly as possible, reduces the stress, stigma, trauma and isolation that can result when someone experiences homelessness.

Preventing homelessness where possible is also typically less costly than providing emergency resources for someone who is already experiencing homelessness.

In York Region's Homelessness Service System, **Prevention** programs offer a range of supports, including financial assistance and short-term case management, that help people who are at risk of homelessness – for example, because they owe rent arrears or have received an eviction notice – to retain their housing or find a new place to live.

Diversion focuses on providing problem solving and flexible support to help people who have lost their housing find a temporary, safe alternative to emergency housing, while connecting them with resources to obtain permanent housing.

Prevention Requires Provincial and Federal Engagement

Recent research has shown that housing affordability and availability is the most significant predictor of the rate of homelessness in different communities.³² Other structural factors that can impact the overall risk of homelessness include low income and/or lack of adequate income security.

This finding highlights the importance of prevention strategies that aim to make it less likely any individual will experience homelessness, in addition to supports such as short-term financial assistance to prevent housing loss. Examples of this type of prevention include government policies that increase the supply of affordable housing, as well as ensuring that income security programs like Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Program are increased to match increases in the cost of living.

Community-level actions must focus on advocacy for continued, active engagement and investment by the provincial and federal governments to address these challenges.

³² Colborn, G., & Aldern, C. (2023). Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain US Housing Patterns. University of California Press.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Through community engagement and research, the Region learned many people and community organizations are not aware of the programs and services offered across the Region. People at risk of homelessness often do not realize there are supports that can provide financial help and connect them with community services to stay housed.

- Residents who are struggling to pay rent or bills are often not connected with prevention services until they hit a crisis, at which point it may be too late to prevent an eviction.
- Diversion is an emerging approach that has shown promising results in helping families in York Region avoid emergency housing and should continue to be expanded.
- Landlord and tenant education resources, and a comprehensive strategy for eviction prevention and better access to mediation services, are needed to help preserve tenancies.
- There is a need to continue to work with partners in provincial systems, including the health sector and child welfare system, to avoid discharges to homelessness and for improved access to mental health and addictions supports.
- Advocacy for government action on additional social services supports and housing costs is essential to reduce the overall risk of people becoming homeless in York Region.



“When I became homeless, the first priority was to find shelter. Went to the library, searched for shelter in York Region, found out about Central Intake and called... when I arrived, seeing the resources was helpful.”

(Lived Experience Focus Group Participant)



Feedback from Community Consultations and Research

PRIORITY 2

Intervention and Housing Stability

When a person loses their housing, they need access to emergency interventions to meet basic needs for safety, shelter and food in the short-term. At the same time, to end their homelessness, they also need support to obtain housing and connect with longer-term supports to help them remain stably housed.

In York Region’s Homelessness Service System, **Intervention** includes immediate, short-term responses to homelessness, such as emergency

and transitional housing, and case management and system navigation help that focuses on finding housing. Access to these types of services should be immediate when a person becomes homeless and are intended to be time-limited (for example, Emergency Housing is typically meant to be used for a maximum of 30 days).

Housing stability supports help people find housing and remain housed. This includes long-term rent assistance and case management to help address physical and mental health needs, increase income stability and food security, and work toward their individual goals for overall wellbeing. Housing stability supports may be temporary (for example, six months to one year) or continue as long as the person requires support (for example, Housing First programs), depending on individual needs and circumstances.

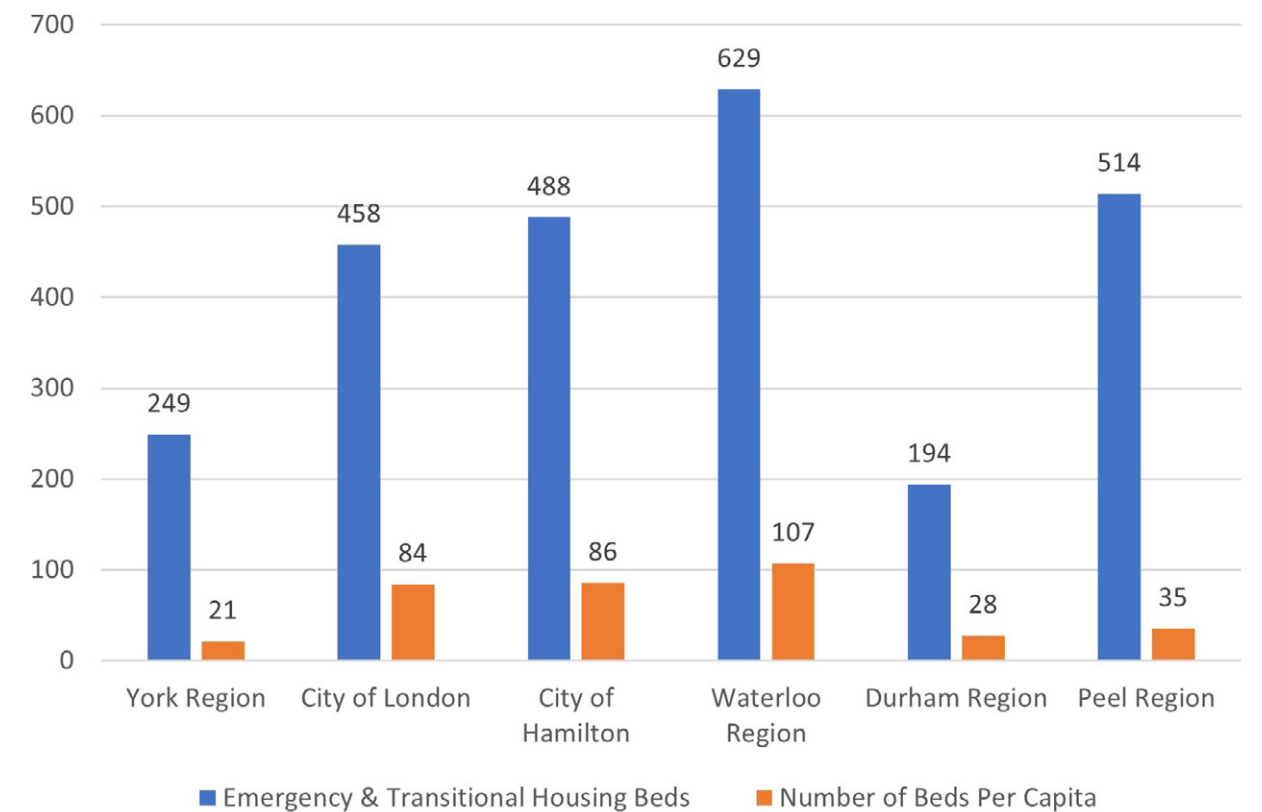
WHAT WE LEARNED

Intervention:

- The emergency housing system in the Region is at or near capacity. There is an urgent need for more beds in emergency housing.
- Currently, year-round emergency housing beds for youth are available in the Town of Georgina and City of Richmond Hill, while emergency housing for adult men and women is concentrated in the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Newmarket. Given the distribution of emergency and transitional housing services, residents must often travel long distances to access services. This can take them away from their home communities and natural support networks like family and friends.

As shown in Figure 1 below, York Region has a lower number of emergency and transitional housing beds per capita, compared with other Ontario service areas.

FIGURE 1: EMERGENCY AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING BEDS PER CAPITA



To address the need for more emergency and transitional housing capacity, the Region will move forward with planning to **add two new emergency and transitional housing sites** with approximately **135 beds**.

Affordable, permanent housing is essential to end homelessness. All consultation participants agreed the main focus of the homelessness service system must be helping people obtain permanent housing, with ongoing support services based on individual needs.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Intervention:

- More targeted emergency housing options are important to better meet residents' diverse needs, including women and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. It is also important to provide low-barrier shelter for people with complex needs, and options that keep couples together and allow people to stay with their pets. This would align with the overall goal of strengthening the Region's human rights-based approach.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities must be considered in all program and service planning, recognizing that barriers to accessibility are intersectional with other systemic barriers.
- People with lived experience emphasized the importance of empathetic staff who can provide support and help them work to find permanent housing, and that staff often have limited time to help each individual.
- Agency leaders stressed the need for emergency housing sites to have sufficient onsite housing specialists and other services to ensure people staying in emergency housing have consistent access to support to find housing and connect with resources to help them stabilize after they leave.
- Affordable, permanent housing options are essential to end homelessness, including chronic homelessness.

Housing Stability:

To help people who experience homelessness find and keep permanent housing, York Region heard through the consultations there is a need for:

- A comprehensive approach and continued investment in resources to provide people who are unsheltered and/or living in encampments with access to safe, appropriate housing and supports that meet their needs. This finding also aligns with the recommendations of the Federal Housing Advocate.³³
- More rent assistance and long-term intensive case management for people who have experienced chronic homelessness. Existing programs need to be strengthened to align with a Housing First approach and expanded to serve more people.
- More wraparound support services and short- and longer-term rent assistance is also needed for people who have less complex needs, to ensure they can obtain housing and remain stably housed. Case management is critical to help connect people with community resources and supports that help them stabilize in the long term.
- A coordinated landlord engagement strategy to increase the supply of rental units available to people accessing housing stabilization supports. This will help ensure that different programs and service providers are not competing for the same rental units.

³³ Office of the Federal Housing Advocate. (2024). *Upholding dignity and human rights: the Federal Housing Advocate's review of homeless encampments - Final report*. Ottawa: The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate.



Feedback from Community Consultations and Research

PRIORITY 3

Systems Response

Homelessness is a complex issue that involves many different sectors, including health care, housing, employment, and social services. Preventing, reducing and ending homelessness requires a “whole of community” response in which all levels of government, service providers, local businesses and residents each have a role to play in responding to homelessness.

As the provincially designated Service Manager, the Region has a responsibility to identify partnerships, actions and resources required to coordinate a system-level response to homelessness. The Region must also work together with other system leaders to identify shared priorities and opportunities.

The Region is already working to make the system more data-driven, using program data to better understand the level of need and service outcomes and plan accordingly. Tools such as the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and the By-Name List support this work and the Region and its partners are continuing to enhance their use to improve system planning and support coordinated service delivery.

What makes an integrated Homelessness Service System?

An integrated Homelessness Service System involves collaboration and coordination among different programs, agencies and sectors to respond to homelessness efficiently and effectively and connect people experiencing homelessness with the right supports for each person or family. This means a constant exchange of information and data to ensure people receive the supports they need wherever they are in the Region, and that supports can be tailored to their needs. An effective system can better respond to homelessness if it can be flexible and aimed to achieve specific outcomes. Ensuring that people are not required to re-tell their story is also critical to delivering person-centred, trauma-informed services.



“Why isn’t there a central place to keep all of our information so that we don’t have to retell our stories?”

(Lived Experience Focus Group Participant)



WHAT WE LEARNED

Through consultation and engagement work, York Region heard that to continue to build an integrated systems response to homelessness, the Region needs to:

- Build on existing partnerships to establish a system leadership table to help set direction and shared priorities for a whole of community response to homelessness.
- Improve data collection and data use to support continuous improvement and service system planning, and work with partners to better integrate and share data across different systems.
- Continue working with United Way Greater Toronto and other partners to build the Coordinated Access System to improve the way people are prioritized, matched and referred to available services.
- Work with community service providers to invest in training to build staff capacity and review staffing models. People with lived experience highlighted the importance of staff who engage with empathy, work with them to set goals and help with system navigation.
- Engage the community and continue to build relationships with a broad range of organizations.
- Increase integration and coordination among different Regional program areas to provide more effective and consistent support to shared clients.

Feedback from Community Consultations and Research

PRIORITY 4

Advocacy and Engagement

Homelessness is a complex problem. Although housing is critical to end a person's homelessness, helping a person find and keep housing is dependent on many different factors. Policies that determine where and how much housing will be built, and how much of it will be affordable to people with lower incomes, education and employment opportunities, income security policies, access to appropriate health and mental health supports, and more, play interconnected roles in responding to homelessness and enabling people to remain stably

housed.

Three priority areas were initially identified to organize actions within the System Plan. Through the consultation activities in the first quarter of 2024, York Region heard that there are many issues that need to be addressed by other levels of government. Community voices highlighted the importance of the Region engaging in advocacy to address these foundational needs, and to do so in partnership with the community. As a result, a fourth Priority Area was added to the System Plan - Advocacy and Engagement.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Throughout the consultations, participants identified opportunities for the Region to be a partner in ongoing advocacy to other levels of government to address structural factors that could support the larger goal of ending homelessness.

- Advocate for investment in upstream prevention to address the root causes of homelessness, such as family breakdown, domestic abuse, mental health and addictions.
- Advocate for collective action to address the cost of living and increases to social assistance rates, which are no longer sufficient to secure adequate housing.
- Call on the Provincial and Federal governments to invest in housing and income supports, with sustained dedicated funding.
- Advocate for improvements in access to mental health care as a primary care service.
- Support advocacy efforts related to long-term care capacity.



MOVING OUR PRIORITIES FORWARD FOR 2024 TO 2027



The following sections outline objectives and activities to move the Priority Areas forward over the next four years. Activities include actions that will be undertaken between 2024 and 2027 to build a strong foundation to respond to homelessness. Milestones set out tangible tasks associated with each activity, and performance measures will help monitor the impact. A detailed implementation plan, with timelines for the activities and milestones, is set out in Appendix C.



“It doesn’t make sense to make people wait to get help until they’ve been homeless for months. That’s when depression, mental health, substance use come in.”

(Lived Experience Focus Group Participant)



PRIORITY AREA 1



Prevention and Diversion

Activities under Priority Area 1 will focus on enhancing prevention programs to help more people stay housed. The Region will expand and enhance diversion, and advocate for the systemic and structural changes to reduce the overall risk of homelessness in the community.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. People who are at risk of homelessness remain housed	1.1 Improve eviction prevention	Identify opportunities to support and enhance eviction prevention programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of people supported through Housing Stability Program and Homelessness Prevention Program who retain their housing after six months
		Work with partners to develop a broader eviction prevention strategy for the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of people supported through Housing Stability Program and Homelessness Prevention Program who retain their housing after 12 months
	1.2 Strengthen homelessness prevention programs	Evaluate Region-delivered homelessness prevention programs and identify opportunities to strengthen these programs, including enhanced case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of people accessing York Region-funded homelessness prevention programs
		Increase awareness of homelessness prevention resources to a broad range of residents, including strengthening partnerships with community tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are connected to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit
		Develop a “prevention toolkit” to provide an information resource for community service providers and residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of visits to the york.ca prevention website Toolkit developed
		Research new and emerging homelessness prevention practices to identify new approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of partnerships identified
	Explore options and partnerships to help people access simple furniture and home goods and/or provide storage for belongings to increase housing retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of households assisted with simple furnishings (pending approval of funding/program) 	

PRIORITY AREA 1



Prevention and Diversion

Activities under Priority Area 1 will focus on enhancing prevention programs to help more people stay housed. The Region will expand and enhance diversion, and advocate for the systemic and structural changes to reduce the overall risk of homelessness in the community.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
2. More people are diverted from emergency housing and connected with alternate supports	2.1 Enhance emergency housing diversion programs to help people connect with alternatives to emergency housing	Evaluate Region-delivered Emergency Housing Diversion program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of people seeking emergency housing who are successfully diverted from emergency housing
		Identify options to enhance the Diversion program including flexible supports	
		Engage service providers to explore options to deliver diversion supports to people seeking emergency housing	
	2.2 Strengthen homelessness diversion for people with complex needs	Develop partnerships to facilitate appropriate referrals for individuals with higher needs seeking emergency housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of partnerships # of people with complex needs diverted to appropriate community supports
Enhance ongoing collaboration with provincial systems, including health and mental health care, to reduce discharges into homelessness			

The activities identified under Priority Area 1 will build on the successes of York Region's current prevention and diversion programs. It is expected that by increasing awareness of available supports and services, including understanding of eligibility, more people will be able to access prevention supports and maintain stable housing.

PRIORITY AREA 2



Intervention and Housing Stability

To advance Priority Area 2, the Region will focus on strengthening and expanding the core programs that help people experiencing homelessness meet their short-term needs, obtain housing quickly, and provide individualized supports and financial assistance to stay housed.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. People who experience homelessness have access to high-quality supports focused on housing stability	1.1 Provide more wraparound supports including system navigation, housing-focused case management, and service referrals to help people find and keep housing and access long-term support	Enhance Outreach supports for people who are living unsheltered/in encampments by expanding hours and adding services and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of unsheltered people who move to long-term housing after Outreach support # and % of unsheltered people who are supported to move to emergency or transitional housing after Outreach support % of service provider staff trained to deliver housing-focused services # of supports to people provided by CPORT Program in encampments and elsewhere # of 911 calls diverted through CPORT Encampment Protocol developed and in place
		Develop a protocol through engagement with all local municipalities including bylaw, police, fire, and other community agencies to coordinate the response to people who are unsheltered/in encampments	
		Provide training and resources to increase capacity to deliver consistent housing services across all emergency and transitional housing programs	
		Develop options to enhance the drop-in service delivery model and expand drop-in services for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness	
		Develop and enhance health care for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including increasing capacity of the Community Paramedicine and Outreach Response Team (CPORT) starting summer 2024	
Explore options to enhance the service delivery model for seasonal and overnight shelter programs			

PRIORITY AREA 2

Intervention and Housing Stability



OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. People who experience homelessness have access to high-quality supports focused on housing stability	1.2 Provide housing programs for people with high needs and complex barriers, including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness	Strengthen and expand Housing First approaches to programs to support people with complex needs, such as Home Now, including increasing capacity starting in 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of people experiencing chronic homelessness who are housed # of people in York Region-funded housing and support programs who retain housing after six months, 12 months and 24 months # of staff who participate in training
		Work with partners to consider identifying principles and best practices to support people who use substances into program standards, as appropriate, and provide education and training for service providers	
Explore options to enhance the Housing with Supports program			
2. People who experience homelessness have access to emergency shelter	2.1 Increase emergency housing capacity to reflect need	Add 30 beds in existing emergency and transitional housing facilities starting Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new emergency housing beds % change of seasonal and overnight shelter spaces % change of the occupancy rate for emergency and transitional housing Reduced length of stay
		Add 34 beds in hotels starting Summer 2024	

PRIORITY AREA 2

Intervention and Housing Stability



OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
2. People who experience homelessness have access to emergency shelter	2.1 Increase emergency housing capacity to reflect need	Explore options to increase Emergency and Transitional Housing capacity, including the use of hotels and adding at least two new Emergency and Transitional Housing sites with approximately 135 beds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new emergency housing beds % change of seasonal and overnight shelter spaces % change of the occupancy rate for emergency and transitional housing Reduced length of stay
		Add up to 75 additional seasonal shelter beds starting October 2024	
		Continue to identify options to maintain and expand the availability of seasonal and overnight shelter programs	
		Partner with local municipalities to identify locations and options to expedite new Emergency and Transitional Housing	
		Develop new emergency housing, pending confirmation of capital funding and planning approvals	
Explore options to increase emergency housing options to serve diverse populations, including newcomers, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, racialized communities, people with disabilities, women, youth and seniors			
		Investigate options to increase access to low-barrier emergency shelter	

PRIORITY AREA 2

Intervention and Housing Stability



OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
2. People who experience homelessness have access to emergency shelter	2.1 Increase emergency housing capacity to reflect need	Move forward with redevelopment of three existing emergency and transitional housing sites (Porter Place, Leeder Place and Sutton Youth Services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of Regional and service provider staff participating in anti-racism and inclusion training
3. Services are responsive to diverse communities	3.1 Respond to over-representation of priority populations (including Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQI+, as well as people with disabilities) among people experiencing homelessness	Enhance and build relationships with communities and organizations to strengthen the response to priority populations who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in York Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new emergency housing beds % change of seasonal and overnight shelter spaces % change of the occupancy rate for emergency and transitional housing
		Invest in training and resources for service providers to increase knowledge of Anti-Racism practices, prejudice and unconscious bias, and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced length of stay

The activities and milestones identified for Priority Area 2 will enable more people who experience homelessness in York Region, including people who are living unsheltered or in encampments, to access emergency and transitional housing, help to find long-term housing, and support services to help stabilize and remain housed.

PRIORITY AREA 3

Systems Response



Activities under Priority Area 3 will focus on working with partners to continue to build an integrated system to respond to homelessness.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. The homelessness response in York Region is coordinated across a strong network of partners	1.1 Collaborate with partners to effectively manage the service system	Establish a homelessness system leadership table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System leadership table established # of campaign activities # of Point-in-Time Counts conducted
		Work with United Way Greater Toronto to strengthen coordination between roles as Service Manager and Community Entity	
		Complete Point-in-Time Counts required by provincial and federal governments	
	1.2 Strengthen and build partnerships to respond to homelessness	Engage other Greater Toronto Area Service Managers on responses to homelessness	
Explore interest and opportunities to deepen partnerships with other organizations, including faith-based groups and community groups that may support people experiencing homelessness			
	Work collaboratively with York Regional Police, York Region Transit and local municipal staff to support people experiencing homelessness, including people who are unsheltered.		

PRIORITY AREA 3

Systems Response



OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. The homelessness response in York Region is coordinated across a strong network of partners	1.3 Strengthen internal partnerships to support people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness	Provide educational activities to increase awareness of homelessness services across Community and Health Services Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of staff who participate in education activities • # of referral processes established • # of information sessions on Regional programs provided
		Work with internal partners to identify opportunities to identify and support clients who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness	
		Increase awareness of Regional services, such as Transit Assistance Programs and Children’s Services, to help people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness	
	1.4 Improve coordination and planning across the service system to connect people to appropriate and available services	Implement and expand prioritization for housing programs targeted toward people experiencing homelessness, in collaboration with the Coordinated Access Governance Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritization framework is established • # of organizations participating in the prioritization process • # and % of people matched to housing and support through the prioritization process • People with lived experience are engaged in program development and evaluations
Evaluate Emergency Housing Central Intake Line to identify opportunities for continuous improvement and performance measures			
Explore options to increase integration of case management functions across different internal and external services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness			

PRIORITY AREA 3

Systems Response



OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
2. The Homelessness Service System has increased capacity to plan to meet existing and emerging needs	2.1 Enhance use of tools and data to support system planning and set service targets, using a continuous improvement lens	Strengthen Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) data collection and analysis capacity to inform system planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of York Region-funded agencies and programs using HIFIS • # of continuous improvement activities
		Monitor and report regularly on emergency housing and seasonal shelter capacity to meet demand	
		Develop public data dashboards for reporting and community partner use	
		Explore and expand use of data forecasting for long-term system planning	
	2.2 Engage people with lived experience in all program development and evaluation activities	Collaborate with United Way Greater Toronto to support a lived experience advisory committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement standards are developed • # of engagements with people with lived experience
		Develop standards for lived experience engagement	
Identify options to obtain ongoing feedback from people who use homelessness services			
2.3 Strengthen the capacity, capability and competency of the service system and service providers	Enhance training for frontline staff and service providers to support integration of best practices and new innovations into the service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of staff who participate in training • Funding model review completed 	
	Review funding and staffing models and identify options to improve staff retention and recruitment		

Activities under Priority Area 3 will allow York Region to strengthen the homelessness service system and a whole of community approach to respond to homelessness. Activities will result in a more coordinated network of service providers and community agencies that can adapt quickly to changes in homelessness data trends.

PRIORITY AREA 4



Advocacy and Engagement

Activities under Priority Area 4 will focus on identifying opportunities to engage and advocate to other levels of government, working in partnership with the community.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. Other levels of government and the broader community are engaged in responding to homelessness	1.1 Develop and implement an agenda to guide advocacy to the Provincial and Federal governments to address structural and system issues	Develop an advocacy agenda to guide advocacy to the Provincial and Federal governments to address structural factors including income security and housing affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy agenda developed • # of advocacy actions taken
		Advocate, alongside community partners, for sustainable funding for employment and education programs that reduce homelessness	
		Advocate for improved access to trauma-informed mental health, substance use and culturally appropriate wellness supports	
		Continue to advocate for sustained federal and provincial funding and policy changes to increase the supply and access to affordable housing of all types	
		Advocate for predictable, long-term investment in portable housing benefits, including for people who are experiencing homelessness	
Advocate to the Provincial government to increase social assistance rates			

PRIORITY AREA 4



Advocacy and Engagement

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. Other levels of government and the broader community are engaged in responding to homelessness	1.2 Increase community knowledge and awareness of homelessness in York Region	With community partners, develop a coordinated information campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign developed • # of hits to campaign page on york.ca • # of campaign activities

Continued advocacy with service providers, community partners, services managers, and municipalities to call for increased provincial and federal funding to support the homelessness response is critical. Municipalities cannot respond to homelessness alone and require significant supports from other levels of government.

ACCOUNTABILITY METHODS

Measuring and reporting on progress toward the goals and actions identified in this Plan is critical to ensure the Region is moving forward and making a difference for residents. Performance measures have been identified for each activity. Progress toward the Homelessness Service System Plan actions and the performance measures will be reported through the annual Progress Report for the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.



CONCLUSION

York Region is working to address the challenges of homelessness, which is increasing across Ontario. The homelessness service system must continue to evolve to more effectively support residents who are experiencing homelessness today and ensure there is capacity to respond to new and emerging needs in the future.

Preventing, reducing and ending homelessness is important. By helping people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and keep stable housing, the Region and its partners are supporting these individuals' and families' long-term well-being. This work in turn supports Council's Vision for York Region as a strong, caring, and safe community.

The System Plan is flexible and will enable the Region and its partners to continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, as well as shifts in federal and provincial priorities. There is also a commitment to continued engagement with people with lived and living experience of homelessness to support future planning, ensuring that the service system will be responsive.

The System Plan will continue to strengthen the Region's role as Service Manager, developing capacity to plan, administer, and deliver services and building on existing partnerships with system leaders including United Way Greater Toronto, as well as community-based agencies, local municipal parks and bylaw enforcement staff, library workers, and many others. The federal and provincial governments must continue to play their roles, investing in long-term sustainable funding for communities.

Homelessness impacts the whole community. Working together, the Region and its partners can and will build a responsive service system that enables residents who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and keep housing and provide long-term stability.



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Appendix A – Common Terms and Definitions

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Chronic Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic homelessness describes people who have been experiencing homelessness for six months or longer in the past year, or people who have experienced homelessness for more than 18 months in the past three years.
Coordinated Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated Access brings consistency to how people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness access housing and related services, within a geographic area. It uses a By-Name list to streamline their connection to services. It helps organizations and service providers work together to achieve shared goals. Some essential elements include a shared database, shared assessment and triage process to match people to appropriate services. It includes an integrated governance structure to oversee the process and use of the database.
By-Name List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A By-Name List counts the number of unique individuals who experience homelessness on at least one day each month. It provides real-time data to support coordinated access and set priorities for helping individuals and families. People are added to the list (inflow) when they begin accessing homelessness services, and are removed from the list (outflow) if they obtain housing or stop accessing services. At a system level it shows overall homeless inflow and outflow, making it valuable for assessing system performance and providing evidence of needs.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that someone will experience homelessness. Immediate prevention programs can include providing short-term financial assistance for costs such as rent or utility arrears, housing mediation and legal assistance to prevent evictions.
Diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversion refers to assistance designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing. Diversion is a client-driven approach. It helps the person or household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than enter shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It ensures that the homeless experience is as brief as possible, to prevent unsheltered homelessness, and to avert stays in shelter.
Housing First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing First is a service model targeted at people who have complex needs and barriers in their experience with chronic homelessness. The key principles include immediate access to housing with no pre-conditions, choice and self-determination, recovery orientation (including harm reduction), individualized and person-driven supports, and social and community integration. (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014).



Appendix B – Homelessness Programs and Services

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
Housing Stability and Homelessness Prevention Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities, and other housing costs, and up to six months of wraparound supports to York Region residents, to help people maintain stable housing.
Diversion Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists people to find safe alternative housing options, including temporary stays with friends or family, to prevent the need to enter emergency housing. The program provides rapid response for residents who are at imminent risk of homelessness or who may be experiencing homelessness.
Outreach Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides short-term intensive case management, service navigation, referrals to health and social services, and crisis support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and/or keep stable housing. Outreach staff provide support to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, where they are sheltering (e.g. encampments). Outreach workers also collaborate with community agencies, emergency medical services, police, local municipal by-law and the public to achieve improved client outcomes including health, housing stability, personal and community safety.
Community Paramedicine Outreach Response Team (CPORT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A partnership between the Region’s Homelessness Community Programs Outreach team and Community Paramedicine, and two local doctors. CPORT, outreach workers and community paramedics work in partnership to provide primary care, mental health and substance use, and social supports to people where they reside, including encampments.
Cold Weather Response and Heat Relief Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> York Region’s Cold Weather Response Plan provides services for people experiencing homelessness during the cold weather season. Expanded services are provided to safeguard people experiencing homelessness from cold weather, alert people experiencing homelessness and other members of the public that cold weather conditions are expected or currently exist, and to support community members to take appropriate precautions. York Region’s Heat Relief Plan provides expanded supports and services to people experiencing homelessness during the hot weather season, such as drop-in programs, municipal cooling centres, community meal programs, and cooling kits to help mitigate the effects of extreme heat.

Appendix B – Homelessness Programs and Services

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
Drop-In Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drop-in programs provide people who are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness with meals, personal supplies, access to shower and laundry facilities, support to find housing and obtain referrals, and warm transfers to health and other social services. York Region funds drop-by programs and operates them in partnership with community partners and local municipalities across the Region.
Emergency and Transitional Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> York Region provides oversight and operational funding for nine emergency and transitional housing facilities delivered by community agencies that offer temporary housing, drop-in/drop-by services, case management, life stabilization support, and assistance to develop individual housing plans.
Home Now Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This program provides people experiencing chronic homelessness with wrap around supports to find and keep long-term housing and remain stable in the community. Households in the Home Now program receive rent subsidies and supports to find and maintain housing, as well as wraparound supports related to mental health, substance use, budget management and employment.
Homes with Supports Program (HWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides supports with daily living including lodging, meals, etc., to low-income residents who may have a mental health diagnosis or are elderly and frail and are unable to live independently. Referrals are accepted from a variety of sources, including hospitals and community agencies.
Homemakers and Nurses Services (HNSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides homemaking services and foot care to low-income residents so they can remain in their home when they have a temporary or permanent illness or disability. This program is partially funded by the Ministry of Health.
Integrated Support Program (ISP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides social worker support to people with complex needs. Support can include short-term counselling, case management, and community referrals.

PRIORITY 1

Prevention and Diversion

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES				
				2024	2025	2026	2027	
1. People who are at risk of homelessness remain housed	1.1 Improve eviction prevention	Identify opportunities to support and invest in eviction prevention programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # and % of people supported through Housing Stability Program and Homelessness Prevention Program who retain their housing after six months • # and % of people supported through Housing Stability Program and Homelessness Prevention Program who retain their housing after 12 months • # of people accessing York Region-funded homelessness prevention programs • # of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are connected to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit • # of visits to the york.ca prevention website • Toolkit developed • # of partnerships identified • # of households assisted with simple furnishings (pending approval of funding/ program) 		●	●		
		Work with partners to develop a broader eviction prevention strategy for the Region, including landlord/tenant education				●	●	
	1.2 Strengthen homelessness prevention programs	Evaluate Region-delivered homelessness prevention programs and identify opportunities to strengthen these programs, including enhanced case management			●	●		
		Increase awareness of homelessness prevention resources to a broad range of residents, including strengthening partnerships with community tables			●	●	●	●
		Develop a “prevention toolkit” to provide an information resource for community service providers and residents				●		
		Research new and emerging homelessness prevention practices to identify new approaches					●	
		Explore options and partnerships to help people access simple furniture and home goods and/ or provide storage for belongings to increase housing retention				●	●	●

PRIORITY 1

Appendix C

Prevention and Diversion

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
2. More people are diverted from emergency housing and connected with alternate supports	2.1 Enhance emergency housing diversion programs to help people connect with alternatives to emergency housing	Evaluate Region-delivered Emergency Housing Diversion program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of people seeking emergency housing who are successfully diverted from emergency housing 	●	●		
		Identify options to enhance the Diversion program including flexible supports				●	●
		Engage service providers to explore options to deliver diversion supports to people seeking emergency housing			●	●	●
	2.2 Strengthen homelessness diversion for people with complex needs	Develop partnerships to facilitate appropriate referrals for individuals with higher needs seeking emergency housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of partnerships # of people with complex needs diverted to appropriate community supports 		●	●	
		Enhance ongoing collaboration with provincial systems, including health and mental health care, to reduce discharges into homelessness		●	●	●	●

PRIORITY 2

Appendix C

Housing Stability and Intervention

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
1. People who experience homelessness have access to high-quality supports focused on housing stability	1.1 Provide wraparound supports when and where they're needed to help people find and keep housing and access long-term support	Enhance Outreach supports for people who are living unsheltered/in encampments by expanding hours and adding services and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of unsheltered people who move to long-term housing after Outreach support # and % of unsheltered people who are supported to move to emergency or transitional housing after Outreach support % of service provider staff trained to deliver housing-focused services # of direct care provided by CPORT Program in encampments and elsewhere # 911 calls diverted through CPORT Encampment protocol in place 	●	●		
		Develop a protocol through engagement with all local municipalities including bylaw, police, fire, and other community agencies to coordinate the response to people who are unsheltered/in encampments		●	●	●	●
		Provide training and resources to increase capacity to deliver consistent housing services across all emergency and transitional housing programs			●	●	●
		Identify options for a drop-in service delivery model and expanded drop-in services for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness			●	●	●
		Develop and enhance health care for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including increasing capacity of the Community Paramedicine and Outreach Response Team (CPORT) starting summer 2024		●	●	●	●
		Explore options to enhance the service delivery model for seasonal and overnight shelter programs			●	●	

PRIORITY 2

Appendix C

Housing Stability and Intervention

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
1. People who experience homelessness have access to high-quality supports focused on housing stability	1.2 Provide housing programs for people with high needs and complex barriers, including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness	Strengthen and expand Housing First approaches to programs to support people with complex needs, such as Home Now, including increasing capacity starting in 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and % of people experiencing chronic homelessness who are housed # of people in York Region-funded housing and support programs who retain housing after six months, 12 months and 24 months # of staff who participate in training 	●	●	●	●
		Work with partners to consider identifying principles and best practices to support people who use substances into program standards, as appropriate, and provide education and training for service providers		●	●	●	●
		Explore options to enhance the Housing with Supports program				●	●
	1.3 Provide medium- and long-term rent assistance for people who are experiencing homelessness	Evaluate and enhance rent assistance programs for people exiting emergency housing			●	●	
		Work with partners to develop a landlord engagement and retention strategy			●	●	●
		Explore options to share housing resources and information across service providers			●	●	●

PRIORITY 2

Appendix C

Housing Stability and Intervention

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
2. People who experience homelessness have access to emergency shelter	2.1 Increase emergency housing capacity to reflect need	Add 30 beds in existing emergency and transitional housing facilities starting Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new emergency housing beds % change of seasonal and overnight shelter spaces % change of the occupancy rate for emergency and transitional housing Reduced length of stay 	●			
		Add 34 beds in hotels starting summer 2024		●			
		Explore options to increase Emergency and Transitional Housing capacity, including the use of hotels and adding at least two new Emergency and Transitional Housing sites with approximately 135 beds		●	●	●	●
		Add up to 75 additional seasonal shelter beds starting October 2024		●			
		Continue to identify options to maintain and expand the availability of seasonal and overnight shelter programs			●	●	●
		Partner with local municipalities to identify locations and options to expedite new Emergency and Transitional Housing		●	●	●	●
		Develop new emergency housing, pending confirmation of capital funding and planning approvals				●	●
		Explore options to provide emergency housing options that serve diverse populations, including newcomers, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, racialized communities, people with disabilities, women, youth and seniors			●	●	
		Investigate options to increase access to low-barrier emergency shelter			●	●	

PRIORITY 2

Appendix C

Housing Stability and Intervention

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
2. People who experience homelessness have access to emergency shelter	2.1 Increase emergency housing capacity to reflect need	Move forward with redevelopment of three existing emergency and transitional housing sites (Porter Place, Leeder Place and Sutton Youth Services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new emergency housing beds % change of seasonal and overnight shelter spaces % change of the occupancy rate for emergency and transitional housing Reduced length of stay 	●	●	●	●
3. Services are responsive to diverse communities	3.1 Respond to over-representation of priority populations, including Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQI+, and people with disabilities, among people experiencing homelessness	Enhance and build relationships with communities and organizations to strengthen the response to priority populations who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in York Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> #/% of Regional and service provider staff participating in anti-racism and inclusion training 	●	●	●	●
		Invest in training and resources for service providers to increase knowledge of Anti-Racism practices, prejudice and unconscious bias, and inclusion			●	●	●

PRIORITY 3

Systems Response

Appendix C

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
1. The homelessness response in York Region is coordinated across a strong network of partners	1.1 Collaborate with partners to effectively manage the service system	Establish a homelessness system leadership table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System leadership table established • # of campaign activities • # of Point-in Time Counts conducted 			●	●
		Work with United Way Greater Toronto to strengthen coordination between roles as Service Manager and Community Entity		●	●	●	●
		Complete Point-in-Time Counts required by provincial and federal governments		●		●	
	1.2 Strengthen and build partnerships to respond to homelessness	Engage provincial systems and other Greater Toronto Area service managers on responses to homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of engagement activities • # of training activities for local municipal staff 	●	●	●	●
		Explore interest and opportunities to deepen partnerships with community-based organizations and faith-based groups and community groups that may support people experiencing homelessness		●	●		
		Work collaboratively with York Regional Police, York Region Transit and local municipal staff to support people experiencing homelessness, including people who are unsheltered and/or living in encampments		●	●	●	●
	1.3 Strengthen internal partnerships to support people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness	Provide educational activities to increase awareness of homelessness services across Community and Health Services Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of staff who participate in education activities • # of referral processes established • # of information sessions on Regional programs provided 		●	●	●
		Work with internal partners to identify opportunities to identify and support clients who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness			●	●	●
		Increase awareness of Regional services, such as Transit Assistance Programs and Children’s Services, to help people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness access additional resources			●	●	●

PRIORITY 3

Systems Response

Appendix C

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES			
				2024	2025	2026	2027
1. The homelessness response in York Region is coordinated across a strong network of partners	1.4 Improve coordination and planning across the service system	Implement and expand prioritization for housing programs for people experiencing homelessness in collaboration with the Coordinated Access Governance Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritization framework is established • # of organizations participating in the prioritization process • # and % of people matched to housing and support through the prioritization process • People with lived experience are engaged in program development and evaluations 	●	●	●	●
		Evaluate Emergency Housing Central Intake Line to identify opportunities for continuous improvement and performance measures		●	●		
		Explore options to increase integration of case management functions across different internal and external services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness			●	●	
2. The homelessness service system has increased capacity to meet existing and emerging needs	2.1 Enhance use of tools and data to support system planning and set meaningful service targets, using a continuous improvement lens	Strengthen Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) data collection and analysis capacity to inform system planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of York Region-funded agencies and programs using HIFIS • # of continuous improvement activities • # people on the By-Name List by inflow, outflow and ongoing 	●	●	●	●
		Monitor and report regularly on emergency housing and seasonal shelter capacity to meet demand		●	●	●	●
		Develop public data dashboards for reporting and community partner use			●	●	
		Explore and expand use of data forecasting for long-term system planning		●	●	●	

PRIORITY 3

Systems Response

Appendix C

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES				
				2024	2025	2026	2027	
2. The homelessness service system has increased capacity to meet existing and emerging needs	2.2 Engage people with lived experience in all program development and evaluation activities	Collaborate with United Way Greater Toronto to support a lived experience advisory committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement standards are developed # of engagements with people with lived experience 	●	●	●	●	
		Develop standards for lived experience engagement			●			
		Identify options to obtain ongoing feedback from people who use homelessness services			●	●		
	2.3 Strengthen the capacity, capability and competency of the service system and service providers	Invest in and enhance training for frontline staff and service providers to support integration of best practices and new innovations into the service system		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of staff who participate in training Funding model review completed 	●	●	●	●
					Review funding and staffing models and identify options to improve staff retention and recruitment		●	●

PRIORITY 4

Advocacy and Engagement

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MILESTONES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIMELINES				
				2024	2025	2026	2027	
1. Other levels of government and the broader community are engaged in responding to homelessness	1.1 Develop and implement an agenda to guide advocacy to the Provincial and Federal governments to address structural and system issues	Develop an advocacy agenda to guide advocacy to the Provincial and Federal governments to address structural factors including income security and housing affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy agenda developed • # of advocacy actions taken 		●	●	●	
		Advocate, alongside community partners, for sustainable funding for employment and education programs that reduce homelessness		●	●	●	●	
		Advocate for improved access to trauma-informed mental health, substance use and culturally appropriate wellness supports		●	●	●	●	
		Continue to advocate for sustained federal and provincial funding and policy changes to increase the supply and access to affordable housing of all types		●	●	●	●	
		Advocate for predictable, long-term investment in portable housing benefits, including for people who are experiencing homelessness		●	●	●	●	
		Advocate to the Provincial government to increase social assistance rates		●	●	●	●	
		1.2 Increase community knowledge and awareness of homelessness in York Region		With community partners, develop a coordinated information campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign developed 		●	●

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