

# **The Regional Municipality of York**

Committee of the Whole  
Community and Health Services  
November 5, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

## **Forecast for Long-Term Care and Seniors' Housing Implications**

### **1. Recommendations**

1. The Chairman send a letter and this report to the Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care, York Region Members of Parliament and York Region Members of Provincial Parliament to:
  - a) Seek commitment from senior levels of government to continue collaborative efforts and funding to provide more long-term care beds in York Region, reflecting the forecasted and unmet need for long-term care beds as detailed in this report.
  - b) Advocate and support the need for more affordable senior-friendly housing options and improve access to health and social services to support seniors to live safely in their own homes for longer.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, Local Health Integration Network, Ontario Health Teams in York Region, Advantage Ontario, Ontario Long-Term Care Association, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Human Services Planning Board of York Region and York Region Community Partnership Council.

### **2. Summary**

The forecast of seniors' housing needs and long-term care capacity in York Region is an action item identified in [York Region's 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan](#) and the [York Region Seniors Strategy](#) approved by Council in [November 2016](#). This report provides a forecast by highlighting the key findings of the York Region Long-Term Care Capacity Needs Assessment Study (summarized in Attachment 1). These findings will inform the update of the Seniors Strategy in 2021. The report also highlights initiatives and partnerships underway to increase support for senior populations, while responding to challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Key Points:**

- Between 2016 and 2041, York Region's senior population is forecasted to grow from 161,910 to 425,000 people representing an increase of 162.3% and creating an urgent need for more long-term care beds and senior friendly housing

- The rapid growth of the senior population is projected to result in an unmet need of 14,954 long-term care beds across the Region by 2041
- The needs of seniors cannot be served by long-term care alone, and there is a significant need for additional housing options for seniors, including purpose-built rental and condominiums, and a range of supports to help seniors age in place
- Many York Region seniors own their own homes and have equity to leverage housing options that will enable them to age in place, but finding suitable and affordable options to age in place in York Region is becoming more difficult
- Seniors with low household incomes, older seniors (75 years of age and older), and renting seniors face the greatest housing affordability challenges and spend a higher than ideal proportion of their income on housing
- Funding, collaborative action and new approaches to long-term care, combining housing and support services, are needed for change
- As the Region works to update its Seniors Strategy, it is also actively working on many initiatives to support program delivery and policy planning for advancing seniors' needs in their communities

### 3. Background

#### **Seniors' housing needs change as they age and they require access to a range of safe, affordable housing options**

Seniors' housing needs depend on their health status, what they can afford and the housing and supports available to them. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Housing options range from living completely independently in a home that is owned or rented, living independently but with some in-home and community supports, living in a retirement home with a scalable level of assistance and service, and full assisted living or long-term care. Information on additional types of supportive housing is the subject of another report included on the November 5, 2020 Committee of the Whole agenda.

Some seniors can maintain an independent lifestyle well into their 90s, while others may require supports, such as those listed below, to remain safely in their homes:

- Meal preparation, home maintenance and modified recreation options
- Mobility aids
- Assistance with transportation
- Help with personal care such as bathing and dressing
- Support with managing finances
- Memory care, as cognitive challenges or dementia progress

In some cases, a senior may decide to renovate their home to improve accessibility and support their activities of daily living. In other cases, a senior may move to another home that is easier or less costly to maintain and closer to services and amenities located in a complete

community. Other options are to move to a home where living space is shared with others, such as in a co-housing, home share or co-ownership arrangement, or to access housing and services together through a hub or campus of care development.

These findings are consistent with the [Getting Better with Age](#) report that reviewed senior-friendly housing options, including built form adaptations and complete communities to raise awareness that both type of community and home impact quality of life as individuals age.

## **The landscape surrounding long-term care, support services and housing options is complex**

The intricate combination of the types of housing and support services needed for seniors makes the continuum complex and multifaceted. System navigation is regularly reported as a challenge since there are multiple players and access points. The range of housing options available to a senior is about more than just a dwelling; as such, services to support independent living are critical. Having access to the right type and amount of community support services makes the difference for many seniors in being able to delay or avoid long-term care.

All long-term care homes are licensed or approved, and funded by the Ministry of Long-Term Care and governed by the *Long-Term Care Homes Act*, 2007. Municipal retirement homes established before the Act came into effect provided some health supports, focusing more on housing and social/recreational supports. Today's long-term care homes are health facilities that provide complex health care. Residents currently admitted to York Region's two municipally-run long-term care homes are increasingly frail with multiple medical conditions, dementia and/or behavioural issues. This is likely to continue well into the future as the population ages and lives longer.

Currently, Local Health Integration Networks are responsible for planning, coordinating, integrating and funding health services at the local level, including services provided through hospitals, home and community care services, community health centres and long-term care homes. All applications, waitlist maintenance and admission to long-term care homes are arranged by Local Health Integration Networks.

Ontario Health Teams are groups of health care providers and organizations, including hospitals, primary care providers, community support service providers, emergency health services and long-term care homes that are accountable for delivering a full and coordinated continuum of care to a defined geographic population. As the Province dissolves Local Health Integration Networks, it is expected that Ontario Health Teams will assume certain home and community care functions, and potentially include administering funding and managing resident placement into long-term care homes in their respective catchment area. Long-term care homes are an integral part of the continuum of care and must be a key part of every Ontario Health Team, given their deep connections within health care, where their expertise and knowledge can be leveraged.

## **The Ontario government has acknowledged unmet community needs have contributed to system pressures on hospitals and long-term care homes**

Ending hallway medicine is a key priority of the provincial government. Seniors are more prone to crisis situations if they require more supports for personal care and tasks of daily living. Long waitlists for assisted living and long-term care often result in seniors living unsupported in the community for longer than they should. In these cases, it is not uncommon for seniors to call 911 for non-emergency issues, only to end up in hospital, often too frail to return home. In the absence of other suitable options, the realities of aging can drive demand and costs for emergency services to levels that are unsustainable.

Currently, there are 3,727 long-term care beds in the Region, with the types listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
**Long-Term Care Bed Type and Number**

Type	Description	Number of Beds
<b>Long Stay</b>	Accommodation for an indefinite period of time	3620
<b>Short-stay and Respite</b>	Beds for a specified time or for caregiver relief	17
<b>Interim</b>	For patients released from hospital while they wait for permanent accommodation	32
<b>Convalescent</b>	For individuals requiring time to regain strength after a hospital stay	48
<b>Veteran</b>	For residents who qualify for assistance based on service in the armed forces, income and health	10
		3,727 total

## **So far the Province has committed 892 new long-term care beds in York Region, as part of its program to add 30,000 new beds in Ontario over the next 10 years**

As part of the commitment to ending hallway medicine, the Province of Ontario accelerated its commitments to modernize and build a safer and stronger long-term care system, investing \$1.75 billion over the next five years and adding 30,000 new long-term care beds over the next 10 years.

Long-term care is defined as permanent accommodation for individuals who need 24-hour supports and personal care via on-site supervision. To date, 892 of those beds have been allocated to York Region (124 new beds to the City of Vaughan, 256 to the City of Markham, 192 to the City of Richmond Hill and 320 to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville). However, as discussed later in this report, York Region was already short 2,000 beds in 2019, and ten years from now, even counting the 892 beds committed to date, York Region will be short by nearly 15,000 beds.

The Region has not applied for new beds for either of its two municipally run homes. While the Region recognizes the need for additional beds, the Region has operated its two long-term care homes for many years and is currently not seeking to add additional homes to its portfolio.

### **Council directed staff to forecast long-term care bed needs in York Region to help plan for and respond to the needs of the Region's aging population**

To help plan for and respond to the needs of the Region's aging population, Council approved the York Region Seniors Strategy in [November 2016](#). The Seniors Strategy set the course for actions the Region can undertake to best support the aging population over the next 10 to 20 years. One of the Strategy's action items is to advocate for improved policy planning and decision-making for long-term care beds in York Region. The Corporate Strategic Plan builds on this action by adding a forecast for long term care beds in York Region as a key activity for 2019-2023, including the required number, type and location.

In 2019, the Region commissioned a study (summarized in Attachment 1) to better understand the growing need for seniors' housing options and the existing and forecasted unmet need for long-term care. This report provides a highlight of the study's key findings.

## **4. Analysis**

### **Growth in the Region's aging population creates an urgent need for more long-term care beds**

The York Region Long-Term Care Capacity Needs Assessment Study showed that York Region's population is increasing and that seniors are the fastest growing demographic. From 2006 to 2016, younger seniors (aged 65 to 74 years) and older seniors (75 years of age and older) grew at a rate of 41.4% and 34.9% respectively. This growth among seniors is forecasted to increase by 162.3% by 2041, with the sharpest growth in the northern municipalities of the Town of Newmarket, Town of Aurora, Town of East Gwillimbury and Town of Georgina. This is illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Projected Senior Population (65 years of age and older) Counts and Proportions:  
York Region and Local Municipalities; 2016 - 2041**

	2016		2041		# Change	% Change
	#	%	#	%	2016 - 2041	2016 - 2041
York Region	161,910	100	424,754	100	262,844	162.3
Southern Municipalities	121,860	75.3	314,599	74.1	192,739	158.2
Northern Municipalities	40,050	24.7	110,155	25.9	70,105	175

Furthermore, seniors are living longer, and as they age, they often require higher levels of care. Since long-term care beds are an essential option for those who can no longer live independently in their own homes, pressure on supportive housing options, such as long-term care, will continue to increase.

York Region has 28 long-term care homes, with 14 of these homes operated by for-profit organizations, 12 homes operated by non-profit organizations, and two municipal homes operated by the Region, Maple Health Centre in the City of Vaughan and Newmarket Health Centre in the Town of Newmarket (the Homes). In April 2020, Maple Health Centre had 473 people on the waitlist for a basic bed (two people per room), and Newmarket Health Centre had 492 people on the waitlist for a basic bed. The total number of people on the waitlist for long-stay beds (basic and private) at Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre was 1,675, which represents 872% of capacity. This is an increase from the previous year, when the number of people on the waitlist on April 30, 2019 was 1,502.

**The Region is currently short by 2,000 long-term care beds and by 2041 that shortage will climb to almost 15,000**

The capacity needs assessment study determined the future need for long-term care beds by looking at the forecast population aged 75 years or older, existing waitlists, planned and known supply including the newly committed 892 beds, and provincial averages for the number of beds per 1,000 individuals aged 75 years or older. This data projects a sharp increase in the number of beds needed by 2041.

As of October 2019, there were 5,032 individuals on the Central Local Health Integration Network waitlist for placement in the Region's 3,727 beds. Most of the applicants were waiting for a long-stay bed (98.8%), with the remaining waiting for a short-stay bed (1.2%). To meet the provincial average of 80 beds per 1,000 individuals aged 75 years or older, York Region needed an extra 2,000 beds in 2019. This number is forecasted to grow to 2,500 by 2021, over 8,000 by 2031, and almost 15,000 by 2041. While the 892 new beds committed to

York Region were considered in the forecast, further analysis shows they will not be enough to offset this growing demand.

The number of people waiting for a bed will continue to be far greater in the southern municipalities. By 2041, the need for additional beds is expected to reach over 11,000 in the southern municipalities (City of Vaughan, City of Markham, City of Richmond Hill), and 3,500 in the northern municipalities (Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Town of Aurora, Town of Newmarket, Township of King, Town of Georgina and Town of East Gwillimbury). A higher concentration of the Region's pre-seniors (age 55 to 64), however, live in the northern municipalities where future demand will grow, and where there are fewer long-term care homes. For example, out of the 3,727 long-term care beds in York Region, 2,433 are located in the southern municipalities and 1,294 beds are located in the northern municipalities.

To further illustrate the geographic locations of the 28 long-term care homes in the Region, please see Attachment 2.

### **The study found that most York Region seniors own their own homes and have equity to leverage a wide range of housing options so they can age in place**

Most seniors in York Region in 2016 owned their own homes (86.6%) and had moderate to high incomes and equity to put toward retirement. 2016 Census data shows 74.2% of seniors living in York Region who own a home are mortgage free. Due to their income levels, these seniors are able to afford more private home care and supports if needed, and a wider range of housing options, such as retirement home fees.

In 2016, 76.9% of owned dwellings were single-detached or semi-detached homes. This type of housing may be ideal for larger households or when raising a family but can be more costly and difficult to maintain for a senior. Even with the benefit of income and equity, it is challenging to find suitable housing that is owned, and maintains or grows its value as an investment for those seniors who would prefer to remain homeowners.

### **While the growing senior population has increased the need for more senior-friendly housing, options are scarce**

The study found that the growing senior population has increased the need for senior-friendly housing, including options catered to a diverse mix of price points, accessibility needs and service levels, and ranging from in-home and community supports to full assisted living.

Condominiums appeal to seniors because they are more accessible, have lower maintenance obligations for the home owner, and are usually more affordable than a single detached home, but supply across the Region is scarce. In 2016, York Region had 24,935 condominium units with the greatest supply in the southern municipalities (89.9% located in the City of Richmond Hill, City of Markham and City of Vaughan). In contrast, there are few options for condominium investment in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Town of East Gwillimbury and Town of Georgina.

Life lease housing is another housing type that is appealing to seniors, falling in between ownership and rental housing. The buyer purchases the "right to occupy" a unit, rather than owning the unit outright, and sells the "right" back to the life lease corporation when they

move out. In this way, the resident can build on their equity investment, and the purchase price is lower than buying title. The life lease corporation can also restrict occupancy; such as that the units may only be occupied by seniors. Life lease is not common in York Region with just 510 units located in the Town of Aurora, City of Markham and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Seniors who do not own their own homes or who want to downsize are attracted to the rental market. The primary rental market includes self-contained units whose purpose is to house tenants, including purpose-built rental apartments and townhouses. The secondary rental market refers to housing that was not built with the purpose of being rental property and is rented through private homeowners.

### **York Region has the lowest proportion of rental housing in the Greater-Toronto-Hamilton Area**

At 14%, York Region has the lowest proportion of housing stock that is rental in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton area with a total of 50,340 rental units. In 2019, the vacancy rate for rental housing in York Region was 1.2%, well below what is considered the healthy rate of 3%. Further details are presented below in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area Rental Stock, 2016 and Associated Vacancy Rates, 2019**

Location	Percentage of total housing (%)	Vacancy Rate (%)
York Region	14	1.2
Durham Region	19	2.5
Halton Region	19	1.9
Peel Region	24	1.2
City of Hamilton	32	3.9
City of Toronto	47	1.5

Much like the market for condominiums, it is not just seniors who seek rental options. Families who are priced out of the home ownership market are competing with seniors for the limited supply of rental housing. Since only a fraction of total rental housing supply is actually suitable for seniors, it is more difficult for seniors to find rental dwellings.



The majority of the Region's purpose-built rental stock is located in the City of Markham, City of Richmond Hill and the Town of Newmarket. These municipalities, in addition to the City of Vaughan, also hold 71.2% of the more expensive secondary rental market. In 2016, there were 44,513 secondary rental market dwelling units, which is 88.4% of the Region's rental supply. Seniors outside these municipalities may need to relocate to find purpose-built rental options, taking them away from familiar social supports. Alternatively, they may choose to spend more than they can afford on other housing options, putting them at risk of crisis.

In recognition of the need for more purpose-built rental units, York Region Council approved a development charge deferral pilot for 225 rental units in the Town of Newmarket in [November 2013](#). The success of this pilot resulted in Council approving a new development charge deferral [policy](#) in [October 2019](#) for up to 1,500 purpose-built rental units over three years. There has been take-up of this new policy in The Town of Newmarket as well as three other agreements in 2020, and exploratory interest from development proponents throughout the Region.

### **More affordable housing options are needed for seniors with lower incomes**

Incomes of senior households are traditionally lower than average household incomes, as most seniors rely on retirement income after age 65. The study confirmed this trend for York Region. In 2015, 56.2% of older seniors (75 years of age or older) had incomes below \$65,363 compared to 25.9% for non-senior households.

It is generally recommended that housing costs not exceed 30% of gross income, so that sufficient income remains for food, transportation and other necessities. Those spending 50% or more are considered to be at risk of homelessness. According to Statistics Canada Housing affordability data from 2015, many York Region seniors with low income are spending a higher than recommended amount of income on housing. Further details are described in Table 4, which highlights how many total senior households spent 30% or more of their income on housing, followed by a deeper dive to show how many of those total households spent 50% of income on housing.

**Table 4**  
**Percentage and Number of York Region Seniors who spent 30% and 50% of income on housing, 2015**

Percentage	Younger Seniors (Aged 65 to 74 Years)	Older Seniors (Aged 75 Years and older)
30%	56.6% (9,830 households)	53.2% (9,710 households)
50%	28.2%	21.9%

	Younger Seniors (Aged 65 to 74 Years)	Older Seniors (Aged 75 Years and older)
Percentage		
	(4,989 households)	(3,999 households)

Seniors with lower incomes who face high average retirement home fees, long wait lists for community housing, and limited supply of affordable rentals are at greater risk of crisis.

### **Additional community housing with on-site support services are needed to help low-income seniors unable to afford retirement homes**

Community housing is essential for low-income seniors who are struggling to find affordable rental housing, but subsidized rental has long waitlists of approximately seven years and limited supply across York Region. In 2019, there were approximately 2,877 community housing units dedicated for seniors, of which 2,064 were subsidized. There were 8,957 senior households on the Region's Centralized Wait List for a subsidized unit, which represents 52% of all households on the waitlist. More community housing supply for seniors is needed, however, so is enhanced funding to provide the health and social support services as an essential component to make this option work.

While retirement homes would provide a suitable alternative to community housing, allowing many seniors to live somewhat independently, retirement home options are generally not affordable for moderate- to low-income seniors. Retirement homes provide supports ranging from meals, recreation and social programming to full assisted living supports for personal care and medical oversight.

There were 3,800 retirement home units in York Region in 2019 and the average monthly fee for accommodation was \$4,628. These fees increase when service levels are scaled up. Because of the higher costs of retirement homes, households need moderate to high incomes (\$65,364 or more) and preferably home equity to finance the higher cost of retirement home living, which costs on average, \$55,536 per year in fees. The study showed that 56.2% of older seniors (aged 75 years or older), or 18,260 households have incomes below \$65,364, making it very difficult for almost half of older seniors to afford this option.

Availability also varies with 68.4% of total retirement home apartments located in the cities of Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill. This is not ideal as it may mean a senior from outside these communities would need to relocate further away from family and friends to access this option.

### **The global pandemic brought attention to long standing issues within the long-term care sector**

In response to the deaths in Ontario Long-Term Care Homes, the Province recently launched an independent commission into COVID-19 and the Long-Term Care sector. The commission will investigate how COVID-19 spread within long-term care homes, how residents, staff and families were impacted, and the adequacy of measures taken by the

Province and other parties to prevent, isolate and contain the virus. Staff anticipate reporting to Council early in the new year with a proposed submission to the commission.

### **The Province is investing in homes impacted by the reduction in occupancy numbers as a result of directive changes**

The impact of COVID-19 and associated directive changes for physical distancing and infection prevention and control has affected some bed capacity at certain long-term care homes in York Region. Since the Province is no longer permitting more than two residents per room, homes that have resident rooms with three to four beds (ward-style rooms) can no longer fill all those beds. As such, the 28 long-term care homes located in York Region are estimating a 4% loss in bed capacity: 163 beds in York Region overall of which 160 beds are lost in the northern municipalities alone. These beds will remain out of service until the COVID-19 pandemic has passed, or until ward-style rooms are replaced with newer one- and two-bed designs.

As a result of the COVID-19 impact on long-term care homes and the new directive changes for physical distancing and infection prevention and control, the Province is investing \$40 million to support homes impacted by the reduction in occupancy numbers and who are also incurring staffing and other operating costs. As the sector has been directed to stop admissions to larger ward style rooms, a key source of income for each operator will be impacted. This funding will help stabilize homes through the transition to lower occupancy rooms.

To further support long-term care homes, the ministry is making a number of new investments to enhance prevention and management of outbreaks in homes. These include \$405 million for prevention and containment measures, \$61.4 million in new funding for small scale capital and physical infrastructure renovations to support improved infection control conditions, and \$30 million for infection prevention and control personnel and related training for new and current staff. The prevention and containment funding will continue until the end of the fiscal year to help homes prevent and rapidly manage outbreaks. Since March, the government has committed over \$797 million to support various COVID-19 emergency measures in long-term care homes.

Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre are currently receiving containment funding on a monthly basis and as of September 2020, a total of \$361,200 has been received. On September 29, the Homes were notified they would receive an additional \$140,800, bringing the total to \$502,000. The province has not indicated the total amount of future funding the Homes are eligible for, however, the Homes will be submitting applications for provincial and federal infrastructure grants to support improved infection and prevention control measures.

### **Maple and Newmarket Health Centres respond to the challenges of COVID-19**

COVID-19 has created unique challenges and vulnerabilities for the Region's two Homes. The increased demand for screening and testing protocols to meet the highest infection prevention and control standards has been a massive undertaking and has required enhanced staffing and supplies to facilitate the realities of a constantly changing shift-work

staff base. For visitor policy changes, staff were redeployed from other areas of the Corporation to assist with virtual family visits through Skype and FaceTime, and facilitate outdoor and indoor visits. Dining protocols also changed and required more one-to-one support for residents.

The 2021 budget submission will include requests for temporary long-term care staffing to bolster the workforce and sustain the new infection and prevention control measures within the Region's long-term care homes.

### **Funding, collaborative action and decision making are urgently needed for change**

New long-term care beds will ease pressures on community health and emergency services so they can be ready for an aging population. While more long-term care beds are required to maintain the service levels necessary to meet the needs of seniors who are living longer with complex challenges, so too are innovative service options that galvanize partners to combine assets and work to achieve change together.

No one organization or service provider can improve the situation alone. The individual roles of the private sector, community partners and government should each be leveraged to lend value and expertise. A collaborative approach, along with increased funding and resources, can incentivize new developments and encourage innovative options to address complete communities, relieve system pressures and improve the health, safety and wellbeing of York Region residents.

This report recommends the Chairman to write a letter advocating to seniors levels of government for:

- Funding and commitment to continue their collaborative efforts and funding to provide more long-term care beds in York Region, reflecting the forecasted and unmet need for long-term care beds
- More affordable senior-friendly housing options and improve access to health and social services to support seniors to live safely in their own homes for longer

### **A new approach to long-term care, combining housing and support services, is necessary**

Meeting the future need for long-term care beds, which is projected to increase by over 700% percent in 20 years, is likely out of reach. However, with this challenge comes an opportunity to move away from the traditional way of doing things, to be mindful of the entire continuum of care and the type of programming and services that are provided so that people can be allowed to age-in-place in their own homes and communities with dignity.

Recognizing global trends, best practices and fiscal pressures associated with an aging population, there is opportunity to support the changing demographic by delivering new, innovative and expanded housing and support services combined together to promote aging at home, provide more efficient and sustainable operations, and strengthen seniors' sense of community as they age.

## **Seniors consistently report they would prefer to age in place in their own home or community for as long as possible, and many can do so safely with appropriate support services in place**

Specifically, seniors require integrated housing and support services and help to navigate the complex system to allow them to comfortably and effectively age in place. Emergency services are especially impacted by non-emergency calls to 9-1-1 for situations where seniors do not know who else to call for needs that would be better served by a community support service.

Home care and support services include a range of services from basic assistance for home maintenance through to personal care. York Region is part of the Central Local Health Integration Network, whose community care program provides approximately 40,000 individuals with home care services daily. In 2019, there were 16 high-needs patients waiting for personal support services, and 117 low-to-moderate needs patients waiting for services. While publicly funded home and community care is mostly able to keep up with current demand, the projected increase of younger seniors (64 to 75 years) and older seniors (75 years or older) indicates that the need for homecare will significantly increase.

Housing models that integrate supports have become popular and are most effective. A campus of care is one example of an aging-in-place continuum of care that combines a range of housing options with built-in support services and healthy lifestyle amenities. In a campus of care, seniors can age in place and enjoy the comfort and security of home and community all in one location.

Another common option is the “hub and spoke” service model for support services. In this model, the service location could be in a seniors’ residential building, supporting the residents of the building but also residents in the surrounding neighbourhood. This is the model envisioned by Council in approving the seniors’ health and wellness hub for its Unionville affordable housing development at 4300 Highway 7 in the City of Markham.

Given the high demand for long-term care beds in the Town of Newmarket, as well as its geography and proximity to surrounding rural communities, this location, as suggested in the study, could potentially serve as a care hub for the northern areas of York Region.

## **The Region continues to champion initiatives to support program delivery and policy planning for advancing seniors’ needs**

Staff continue to work on updating the seniors’ strategy that was initially targeted for 2020 but has been delayed to 2021 because of COVID-19. The findings of the needs assessment study, as well as the new challenges exposed by COVID, will inform the updated strategy.

In the meantime, the Region is actively working on many initiatives to support program delivery and policy planning for advancing seniors’ needs in the community:

- The Region is collaborating with the Ontario Health Teams in York Region with seniors as a target population for year one development. The Ontario Health Team tables are examining issues around system navigation and vulnerabilities which cause seniors to fall into crisis.

- The partnership between York Region, Unionville Home Society and Minto Communities to build a new affordable seniors housing building at 4300 Highway 7 in the City of Markham has broken ground to construct approximately 260 affordable seniors' rental apartments with a target move-in date of end of year 2022, along with a health and wellness community hub for seniors.
- Close collaboration between York Region and United Way of Greater Toronto through the [COVID-19 Community Coordination \(3C\) initiative](#) continues to help get resources to initiatives that are responding to social issues arising from COVID-19. Through this partnership and collaborative planning, 300 vulnerable seniors living with low income have received fresh and frozen food choices and shopper services.
- Enhanced Housing and Homelessness supports implemented wellness checks with 287 seniors living in 12 community housing locations. Housing Services provided referrals to programs and resources where tenants identified a need for support.
- York Region's Community Paramedicine team offers a highly valuable and connected frontline service and is preparing to re-integrate Community Paramedicine Programs, including Home Visits and Clinics (e.g.CP@Clinic) that were suspended due to COVID-19. The programs have been adapted due to COVID-19 to ensure safety of participants and paramedics, while continuing to provide support to residents. As well, the paramedic referral program continues to support seniors who are identified on 911 calls as needing further supports (health or social)

### **Findings support the Healthy Communities priority set by Council in York Region 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan**

The Healthy Communities priority in the 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan focuses on the health, safety and well-being of the Region's residents through improving access to health and social support services. Increasing the supply and affordability of seniors housing options and community care services, including long-term care beds, will provide York Region seniors access to suitable supports as they need them to improve health and prevent crisis.

## **5. Financial**

There is no financial impact at this time.

## **6. Local Impact**

The Region is sharing these findings along with Attachment 1 and 2 to assist with advocacy, to support applications to both increase the supply of and funding for long-term care beds and to encourage an Age Friendly Complete Communities approach to developing housing for the aging demographic. If the combination of housing options, long-term care beds, and initiatives to support program delivery and policy planning for advancing seniors' needs is addressed, residents of all municipalities will be able to age in place with greater flexibility, affordability and access to services to keep them supported in the community for longer.

## 7. Conclusion

The supply of long-term care beds in York Region must increase to keep up with the demands of the aging population. To achieve a greater outlook for York Region seniors who need long-term care, the Region should continue to use its influence to advocate where impact can be made and encourage others to do so where they are able.

There is also significant opportunity to diversify the housing stock in the Region and consider support services so more seniors are able to age in place in their own homes for longer. The availability of senior friendly accommodation varies across York Region and may result in a senior having to leave their own community to find housing options that meet their needs. Insufficient supply of suitable housing options and support services can result in seniors living in the community without financial security and wellbeing, which can lead to crisis.

Across the continuum of housing options for seniors, more supply is needed at lower to moderate price points including affordable retirement home options, purpose-built rental and community housing. Home share, cohousing and campus of care models should be explored as part of the solution as lower income seniors without home equity have very few options.

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For more information on this report, please contact Lisa Gonsalves, General Manager, Paramedic and Seniors Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72090. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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

October 16, 2020  
Attachments (2)  
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