

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Katherine Chislett, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Date: May 21, 2020

Re: Update on Development of Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

This memorandum provides an update on the development of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region since our last report in Fall 2019. The province has advised that the deadline to prepare and adopt a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan has been extended past January 1, 2021. A new deadline is to be set at a later date.

In November 2019, Council approved taking a place-based approach to developing the Region's Community Safety and Well-being Plan

In [March 2018](#) and [April 2019](#), Regional Solicitor reported to Council on requirements to prepare a community safety and well-being plan (Plan) under the *Police Services Act, 1990*. Municipalities are required to identify risks to safety and well-being and develop and implement strategies to help reduce those risks. A Plan was required to be adopted by January 1, 2021.

In [November 2019](#), Council approved a place-based approach to developing the Plan. This involves focusing on a few geographic locations in York Region that, based on data, may benefit most from community safety and well-being planning. While York Region is a great place to live, work and play, and compares favourably to other municipalities, the Plan provides an opportunity to leverage existing initiatives and community resources for targeted action.

Four geographic locations have been identified as initial areas of focus in developing York Region's Community Safety and Well-being Plan

As part of the Fall 2019 report, Council directed the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to use data to determine initial areas of focus. As part of the Plan's development, targeted engagement within and related to those initial areas are to be undertaken, which will help identify and develop strategies to reduce risks to community safety and well-being.

Regional staff used data related to the social determinants of health, which were reported to Council in [February 2017](#), and tools such as the Ontario Marginalization Index ([Attachment 3](#) to the November 2019 report on the Plan) to identify focus areas. Data included measures across a broad spectrum of safety and well-being factors, including those related to household income, employment, housing condition, parent education level, and early childhood development. The focus areas use geographic directions as identifiers, and include locations in Northern Georgina, Central Newmarket, South-Central Markham and South-Central Richmond Hill (see Attachment 1).

Local municipalities with identified focus areas are supportive of this work

Regional staff met with Mayors Quirk, Taylor, Scarpitti and Barrow in Q1 2020. All have signaled support and agreed with the identified focus area in their respective municipality. All four mayors gave approval for York Region to conduct targeted engagement within and related to those areas, and provided valuable insights on key community issues and needs. The mayors also provided very helpful advice on how to best engage their residents.

Regional staff are also tapping into local municipalities' rich knowledge of their communities to inform engagement activities. For example, local municipal staff have already helped to identify some key participants and locations for consultation sessions.

The Human Services Planning Board, the advisory committee for the Plan, is also supportive and has provided helpful ideas to inform this work

At their February 2020 meeting and through subsequent calls, members of the Human Services Planning Board of York Region (the Board) endorsed the four focus areas. Board members, which represent organizations from across the human services sector, provided advice specific to each of the focus areas and insights to help plan for and implement targeted engagement.

Recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on communities and organizations, the Province cancelled the January 1, 2021 deadline

The Solicitor General notified municipalities in late April that the January 2021 deadline is cancelled. A new deadline will be set at a later date. This is intended to give municipalities more time to meet requirements for consultation given COVID-19 has created new, immediate priorities and impacted ability to gather in groups. All other legislated requirements for the Plan remain the same, and no new funding has been announced to support this work.

Regional staff continue to monitor the situation; in-person community engagement remains on hold, but partners are still helping inform this work

Regional staff are monitoring new developments from the Province and staying in contact with counterparts in other Ontario jurisdictions, many of which have substantially scaled back or completely paused their work specific to developing a community safety and well-being plan.

Planned in-person community engagement remains on hold pending recommendations from public health authorities around public gatherings, staff resources and availability of community partners. Regional staff have been researching and contemplating alternative engagement methods (e.g., online surveys, virtual sessions). However, these have not been used to date due to concerns about skewed responses and low participation rates as community organizations, as well as Regional staff, have been focused on pandemic response.

In the meantime, Regional staff are conducting research and learning about community needs from partners, including Board members, through other, pandemic-related initiatives. Many Board members and key community partners participate in the [COVID-19 Community Coordination Initiative](#) the Region is co-hosting with United Way Greater Toronto.

Information and response to needs of vulnerable residents in York Region is helping shape what an appropriate Plan could look after COVID-19 and beyond

Staff are leveraging the Community Coordination tables to keep a pulse on what is happening on the ground in our communities during the pandemic and how evolving community needs may impact the Plan. The [community scan](#), based on insights from these the coordination tables along with other data sources, has already helped improve understanding of community needs. Information from these tables on issues like food security, mental health and addictions, housing and homelessness, and domestic violence will be considered in preparing the Plan. Insights from the review of Community Investment Fund projects in 2020, part of the Region's [COVID-19 social service response](#), will also inform the Plan's development. The proposed Plan will need to be responsive and aligned with community needs and Regional priorities in the "new normal".

Regional staff expect to resume dedicated work on the Community Safety and Well-being Plan towards the latter part of 2020 or early 2021

Once the COVID-19 pandemic stabilizes, Regional staff will resume planning and implementing in-person engagements in each focus area, based on guidance from Public Health. Staff will report back to Council on outcomes of community engagement, including top risks to safety and well-being and proposed strategies. A finalized draft Community Safety and Well-being Plan is expected to be submitted to Council sometime in 2021, pending a new provincial deadline.

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment (1)
eDOCS# 10801171