



Office of the Commissioner  
Community and Health Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Katherine Chislett  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Date: March 19, 2021

Re: Social Service Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic – Q1 2021  
Update

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In [April 2020](#), Committee of the Whole received a report on the Region's Social Service Response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Update memos were brought forward in [May 2020](#), [June 2020](#), [July 2020](#), [September 2020](#) and [November 2020](#). For 2021, quarterly updates will be provided.

### **This memorandum provides an update to the November 2020 memo and includes updates from the first quarter of 2021**

Information from Paramedic and Seniors Services not otherwise included in regular updates to Council by the Medical Officer of Health is included in this memo. Details to the updates and additional information are provided in Attachment 1, organized under the objectives of the Social Service Response presented in the April 2020 report:

1. Monitor current and emerging trends
2. Adapt and enhance core services to meet growing community needs
3. Leverage community partnerships to support vulnerable groups
4. Support economic stability for our most vulnerable residents
5. Pivot to respond to additional social service needs
6. Obtain provincial and federal funding commitments to support activities

## **Health-related inquiries make up majority of resident calls, although mental health-related concerns are growing steadily**

- On January 12, 2021, the Government of Ontario declared a second provincial state of emergency in response to an increasing trend in COVID-19 cases. For York Region, this state of emergency included a stay-at-home order, additional public health measures and workplace safety measures until February 22, 2021. On February 22, 2021, York Region moved to the Red-Control Zone as part of the Province's tiered COVID-19 Response Framework
- New provincial restrictions increased calls to Access York about health-related concerns, which remains the largest category of resident inquiries. A similar trend was observed in 211/FindHelp with increased inquiries related to health and mental health. Given the rise in mental health-related concerns, Attachment 2 provides information about resources available to York Region residents
- Access York has also been providing information and managing the intake related to new pandemic services, including financial assistance under the [High Priority Communities Strategy](#), the Region's Voluntary Isolation Centre and COVID-19 immunization registrations

## **New virtual supports are available for families and children**

- New virtual programming services were launched in Infant Child Development Services, including a parent coaching group and a virtual feeding group session
- EarlyON agencies provided virtual programming, such as live streamed sessions and parenting consultations, with over 1 million views generated since their introduction

## **The Self-Isolation Shelter has now been relocated**

- The Self-Isolation Shelter remains an important part of the COVID prevention program for people experiencing homelessness to isolate while they are awaiting COVID-19 results, or are confirmed positive and have mild symptoms, or are asymptomatic
- The Self-Isolation Shelter was relocated from Leeder Place Family Shelter to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Lake St. George Field Centre in the City of Richmond Hill in November 2020 and capacity at this facility was increased

## **Outbreaks at the Region's two long term care homes are now closed**

- The outbreak at Newmarket Health Centre closed February 16, 2021
- The outbreak at Maple Health Centre closed March 3, 2021

- The Region's two long-term care homes achieved the provincial goal of vaccinating all eligible residents with a first dose by February 10, 2021
- Seniors Services began implementation of Rapid Antigen Testing in the Homes in March 2021 for staff, students, volunteers, and essential caregivers and others (e.g., contracted service providers)

### **Paramedic Services is participating on a strategy to help relocate hospital patients**

- In February 2021, the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital opened in a limited capacity and began accepting COVID-19 patients from hospitals across the Greater Toronto Area. This was part of an on-going provincial strategy to respond to increased numbers of residents being hospitalized due to COVID-19
- York Region Paramedic Services, in partnership with ORNGE, assisted with the relocation of patients that were critically acute and/or in unstable conditions

### **York Region applied for Rapid Housing Initiative funding, but was not successful this round**

- The Rapid Housing Initiative is a \$1 billion program delivered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to support the creation of up to 3,000 new affordable rental home across Canada
- The Region completed an assessment of redevelopment opportunities and applied for nearly \$35 million in capital funding to build 113 additional housing units within 12 months to address the urgent need for more housing for vulnerable populations
- The Region was not selected for program funding during this round of allocations but may be considered for future program expansion

### **York Region is now a partner on all three Ontario Health Teams in York Region**

- York Region became a signed partner with Eastern York Region North Durham Ontario Health Team in May 2020, Southlake Community Ontario Health Team in September 2020 and Western York Region Ontario Health Team in January 2021
- The Region is working with Ontario Health Teams to plan and deliver COVID-related actions

### **The High Priority Communities Strategy is being implemented in York Region**

- The Region is leading elements of, and working with various partners to implement, the Province's High Priority Communities Strategy in York Region

- An overview of the strategy was included in the [February update memo from Public Health](#); results to date are outlined in Attachment 1
- As part of the High Priority Communities Strategy, York Region received funding from the Province to open a Voluntary Isolation Centre. The 280-bed Voluntary Isolation Centre opened on January 25, 2021
- The Strategy also includes providing temporary funding to support those with financial limitations that pose a direct barrier to COVID-19 testing or completing a required period of isolation

### **The COVID-19 Community Coordination Initiative is providing critical resources to support vulnerable groups in York Region**

- United Way Greater Toronto sponsored an assessment of the [COVID-19 Community Coordination \(3C\)](#) initiative that the agency co-hosts with the Region
- Based on the favourable findings, the Region and United Way will continue to support 3C and its tables dedicated to homelessness, food insecurity and seniors issues to at least September 2021. Areas for improvement include widening the initiative's reach to ensure as broad and as diverse a membership as possible, and this is now underway

### **York Region received additional Social Services Relief Funding, to be used for specified purposes as directed by the Province and spent by December 31, 2021**

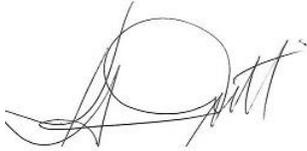
- The Social Services Relief Fund is time-limited provincial funding to help a diverse range of vulnerable people, create longer-term housing solutions for those in need and ensure that the housing and homelessness sector has the tools and support needed to safely and successfully transition to recovery
- The Province announced Phase Three of the Social Services Relief Fund on March 10, 2021. To meet the requirements from the Province for this funding, staff have completed and submitted the sign-back letter and Investment Plan to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Phase Three funding will be used to continue a number of the initiatives developed during Phase One and Two of the Social Services Relief Fund while leveraging this additional funding to respond to new emerging concerns or gaps to support people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic
- Table 1 provides an overview of the three phases of the Social Services Relief Fund

**Table 1**  
**Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) Overview**

Phase	Purpose	Allocation Received (\$ Millions)/Date of Announcement	Funding Conditions
SSRF Phase One	<p>Support a range of vulnerable populations, including people living in community housing, housing with supports, people with low incomes, social assistance recipients, and those experiencing homelessness</p> <p>Funding used to deliver variety of supports and services, including emergency housing and shelter supports for people experiencing homelessness (e.g., Self Isolation Shelter and Transitional Shelter)</p>	4.98 (Mar. 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital projects were not eligible for this funding</li> <li>• Region spent funding by November 2020</li> </ul>
SSRF Phase Two	<p>Expanded the eligible uses of funding, with a focus on resiliency to future waves of COVID-19</p> <p>Funding used to deliver approximately 39 new COVID-19 response projects/programs, including technology supports, food vouchers, mental health support for children, and retrofits and upgrades to emergency shelters, supportive housing and related facilities</p>	8.42 (Oct. 2020) 8.13 (Dec. 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital projects were eligible for this funding</li> <li>• Operating funding had to be spent by March 31, 2021</li> <li>• Capital funding must be spent by December 31, 2021</li> </ul>
SSRF Phase Three	<p>Facilitate the continuation of Phase Two operating projects to maintain, monitor, and improve infection prevention and control measures in congregate care settings and ensure stability in homelessness sector by continuing current supports to address negative impact of COVID-19</p>	10.77 (Mar. 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital projects not eligible for this funding</li> <li>• Funding must be spent between March 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021</li> </ul>
<b>Total (as of March 2021)</b>		<b>32.3</b>	

- Attachment 1 provides additional information on projects funded through the Social Services Relief Fund and includes a list of planned projects for Phase Three funding

Regional staff will continue to monitor community needs and their impact on Community and Health Services programs and work with partners to deliver or adjust services as required.



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Katherine Chislett  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



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Bruce Macgregor  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (2)  
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