

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Community and Health Services
May 13, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Update on the Development of a Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region

1. Recommendations

1. Council approve establishment of a local community action table for each of the four focus areas described in Attachment 1 to support completion of a proposed Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to Clerks of local municipalities, York Regional Police Services Board and Human Services Planning Board of York Region.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with an update on the development of a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region (the Plan), including outcomes of consultations undertaken as part of Plan development as directed by Council in [November 2019](#). Council approval is requested to implement local community action tables in each of the four focus areas that are part of the Plan's place-based approach: northern Georgina, central Newmarket, south-central Richmond Hill and south-central Markham. The community action tables will consider the top risk categories outlined in this report, as well as any additional risk categories deemed a priority, and help identify targeted solutions that will form part of the proposed Plan for Council consideration, expected in 2022.

Key Points:

- The *Police Services Act, 1990* requires single-tier and regional municipalities to prepare and adopt a community safety and well-being plan. The Plan must identify and prioritize, and include strategies to address, risks to community safety and well-being
- In [November 2019](#), Council approved using a place-based approach to developing the Plan and authorized the Commissioner, Community and Health Services to identify geographic areas of focus
- Based on research, data and initial consultations, and with support of local mayors, four focus areas—in the Town of Georgina, the Town of Newmarket, the City of

Richmond Hill and the City of Markham—were identified and communicated to Council in [June 2020](#)

- Regional staff conducted further targeted consultations with community agencies, residents and other stakeholders to prioritize risks in the four focus areas, and identified mental well-being, housing stability and employment and income as top risk categories to consider
- The community action tables will include representatives of local municipalities, York Regional Police, school boards, service providers and resident leaders and will further explore top risks and identify locally-driven solutions
- The Ministry of the Solicitor General set July 1, 2021 as the revised due date for completion of Community Safety and Well-being Plans, and Regional staff have advised provincial counterparts that the Region will not complete its plan until 2022 given the higher priority of addressing COVID-19
- The Human Services Planning Board of York Region, approved by Council as the Advisory Committee to the Plan, supports this approach

3. Background

Preparation and adoption of a community safety and well-being plan is provincially mandated

In March 2018 and April 2019, the Regional Solicitor reported to Council on requirements to prepare the Plan. Municipalities are required to establish an Advisory Committee and consult with members of the public to identify, prioritize and develop strategies to address risks to community safety and well-being. In [June 2018](#) Council designated the Human Services Planning Board of York Region as the advisory committee for the Region's Plan.

The Plan focuses on geographic areas that would most benefit from community safety and well-being planning, leveraging existing community strengths

In [November 2019](#) Council approved a place-based approach to developing the Plan, focusing on geographic locations that would most benefit from community safety and well-being planning. Council directed the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to determine areas of focus and to report-back on outcomes of consultations. Based on research, data and initial consultations, and with support of local mayors, four focus areas—northern Georgina, central Newmarket, south-central Richmond Hill, and south-central Markham—were identified to Council in [June 2020](#) (see Attachment 1).

As part of the provincial guidance for this work, community safety and well-being plans are not meant to 're-invent the wheel' but to instead leverage existing community assets. The Region's place-based approach to developing its plan, and the establishment of community action tables aligns well with the provincial framework.

The COVID-19 pandemic impeded ability to continue with planned community consultations, but demonstrated the value of strong community partnerships

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted work plans for completing the Community Safety and Well-being Plan, including required consultations. The Region needed to divert resources from Plan activities to respond to the public health and social services emergencies caused by the pandemic. Stakeholders vital to the development of a comprehensive plan were also under pressure to respond to increasing community needs.

The pandemic, however, has underscored the need and value of collaborative community action in improving the safety and well-being of residents, and provided the impetus for the formation of such initiatives as the [COVID-19 Community Coordination Initiative](#) in partnership with United Way Greater Toronto. The insights gained through this ongoing initiative have helped to identify risks and strategies that will shape the Plan.

The Province moved the deadline for the Plan to July 1, 2021, but with limited consultation on the new timeline and no funding to support the work

Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on communities and organizations, in April 2020 the Province cancelled the original January 1, 2021 deadline for municipalities to complete and adopt their plans, noting that a new deadline would be announced later. In late December 2020 the Province advised, with limited consultation with and notice to municipalities, that the new deadline would be July 1, 2021. All other legislated requirements remain the same and no municipal funding has been committed by the Province for the work it has mandated. Municipalities, along with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, have expressed concern with the new timeline.

Regional staff informed the Province of challenges with meeting the new deadline due to constraints posed by the continuing pandemic

In February 2021 the Commissioner of Community and Health Services advised Provincial staff of the Region's inability to meet the new deadline due to its focus on responding to the pandemic, a situation in which many other municipalities find themselves. The Commissioner shared information about collaborative activities the Region is undertaking as part of its pandemic response, including the COVID-19 Community Coordination initiative and [work under the Province's High Priority Communities Strategy](#), which complement and support development of the Plan. In its response, the Province stated it was encouraged to hear of the Region's progress in developing its Plan however, noted the extension from January 1, 2021 to July 1, 2021 should provide sufficient time for municipalities to complete a Plan.

The Province may appoint a Planner to complete the Plan on behalf of a municipality that intentionally and repeatedly fails to comply with legislated requirements

Under the Police Services Act, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services "may appoint a person as a community safety and well-being planner for a municipality if, in the Minister's opinion, the municipality has intentionally and repeatedly failed to comply with

one of its obligations” for preparing a Community Safety and Well-being Plan. Renumeration and expenses incurred by the Planner would be covered by the municipality.

Based on staff-level discussions, the likelihood of incurring legislative penalties for missing the July 1, 2021 deadline is low as the Region has demonstrated its commitment, and active efforts, to prepare and adopt a Plan (which the Province has acknowledged).

4. Analysis

Public consultation identified and prioritized mental well-being, housing stability and employment and income as top risk categories in the focus areas

Regional staff leveraged existing collaborative networks and community tables established as part of the Region’s pandemic response to continue to engage with community agencies, residents and stakeholders to support development of the Plan. An online community survey was released in summer 2020, followed by rounds of public virtual consultations later that fall and in Q1 2021. Participants included subject matter experts, service providers, funders like United Way Greater Toronto, residents, community leaders, school boards, York Regional Police, local mayors and municipal staff. The feedback resulted in the prioritization of top risks as outlined in Table 1. Actions to mitigate and respond to these risks will be the focus of the Plan.

Table 1
Prioritized Risks to Community Safety and Well-being

Focus Area	Prioritized Risks
Northern Georgina	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment and income concerns• Mental well-being concerns
Central Newmarket	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental well-being concerns• Housing instability
South-Central Richmond Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental well-being concerns• Housing instability
South-Central Markham	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental well-being concerns• Housing instability

In addition to identifying top risk categories, consultation feedback noted that solutions need to come from the community

One clear and consistent feedback was that solutions to reduce and address risks are most effective when developed by and alongside local communities. Advantages of local collaborative planning include increasing collective impact across communities, building local capacity to respond to broader challenges, and allowing for the development of stronger

service system planning that can be informed by local perspectives. This model has been successfully implemented in many jurisdictions, including Toronto's Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy and Montreal's Collective Impact Project.

Other feedback included need to build the capacity of community agencies to respond to local needs, and to improve service coordination and navigation to make it easier and more effective for residents and clients to access supports. More information on feedback received to date is provided in Attachment 2.

Next steps in developing the Plan include establishing community action tables to delve deeper into priority risks and develop locally-responsive solutions

In response to community feedback, the next phase of Plan activity will include establishment of community action tables in each of the focus areas, pending Council approval.

Membership of the community action tables will include service partners, school boards, the local municipality, York Regional Police, residents and community leaders. The Tables will be led by a community agency (or network of agencies or organizations) that best make sense for the focus area, with support from Regional staff.

Community action tables will be asked to explore the top risk categories further, particularly in the context of the local community, and identify possible shorter-and-longer term solutions that will be considered in the development of the proposed Community Safety and Well-being Plan. It is anticipated that the Plan will be brought forward for Council consideration during the first half of 2022. The Plan is expected to include local actions that can also be scaled up to support communities recover from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, as outlined in regular reports to Council on the Region's social service response to the COVID-19 pandemic (last reported in [April 2021](#)).

While some of the approaches require intervention and leadership from senior levels of government (e.g., income supports), there are Regional and local initiatives that can be leveraged to help respond to and mitigate identified risks, such as actions under the Region's 10-Year Housing Plan, [Housing Solutions](#), the Region's [Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stability programs](#), [partnership with Ontario Health Teams](#), and services provided by agencies supported under the Region's [Community Investment Fund](#).

An update on the development of the Plan was brought forward to the Human Services Planning Board of York Region, the Advisory Committee for the Plan, in March 2021. The Board was supportive of the approach outlined in this report.

Community Safety and Well-being Plan aligns with Vision 2051 and the 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan

Community safety and well-being planning directly supports the Region's efforts in achieving the vision of strong, caring, safe communities. The Plan supports the Vision 2051 A Place Where Everyone Can Thrive goal area which identifies "developing sustainable community safety and crime prevention strategies through community mobilization, engagement and education" as one of the actions.

The Plan also supports the 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan community result area of Healthy Communities and achieves one of the key activities under the Support Community Health, Safety and Well-Being priority area: “develop a community safety and well-being plan to enhance collaboration, engagement and outreach with our community and policing partners.”

5. Financial

In [March 2018](#) Council endorsed Association of Municipalities of Ontario’s advocacy for provincial funding to help municipalities meet community safety and well-being plan obligations. At this time, however, the Region has not received any provincial funding to support the preparation or implementation of the Plan.

Through the 2021 budget process, Regional tax levy was approved for some resources to lead efforts to complete development of the Plan and to support implementation and monitoring of approved actions. Staff will continue to explore opportunities to leverage existing Regional initiatives and any external funding sources to help further support implementation of the Plan. In particular, as part of the review of the Region’s Community Investment Fund staff are considering opportunities to leverage that program to support Community Safety and Well-being Plan actions.

Any additional resources that may be needed will be identified as part of future budget processes.

6. Local Impact

Collaboration and partnerships are key to community safety and well-being planning. This work provides an opportunity to build on Regional initiatives through the development of targeted plans that reflect local context and address community-level gaps. The Region will continue to work closely with York Regional Police, focus area mayors and local councillors, local municipal staff, United Way Greater Toronto, and other community partners to learn more about risks and priorities, leverage resources, and collaborate on implementation of actions under the Plan.

7. Conclusion

The Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region will help build and sustain strong, caring, safe communities for all residents and support the Region as a vibrant, growing destination of choice for employers and residents and their families. Taking a local collaborative planning approach to the preparation of the Plan provides an opportunity to build on Regional initiatives and develop targeted strategies that reflect community needs and address specific services gaps. Insights from local tables will inform the proposed Community Safety and Well-being Plan that will be brought forward to Council in 2022.

For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Silva, Director, Strategies and Partnerships Branch at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77201. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

Katherine Chislett

Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

Bruce Macgregor

Chief Administrative Officer

April 27, 2021

Attachments (2)

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