



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: April 22, 2021

Re: 2021 York Region Homeless Count

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This memorandum provides Council with an update on the provincial requirement under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* for Service Managers to conduct a count of the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the Region before December 31, 2021.

In April 2018, The Regional Municipality of York conducted its first homeless count, I Count, and shared the findings with Council in [April 2019](#). This Point-in-Time count was undertaken in partnership with the United Way of Toronto & York Region (now known as United Way Greater Toronto).

In March 2021, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) announced that Service Managers would be required to do enumeration before the end of 2021 and develop and implement a By-Name List by January 1, 2022. A By-Name List, is a real-time list of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in a community. The Region's first By-Name List was created with consent from respondents in the 2018 York Region I Count survey,

### **Homelessness enumeration provides valuable information about people experiencing homelessness to guide service planning**

The provincial objectives for the local homeless enumeration, are to provide:

- A snapshot of homelessness, including information on the scope and nature of homelessness in communities across Ontario
- Information about people experiencing homelessness and their needs to inform the development of programs and services and identify emerging needs

- Information about whether programs and initiatives are having the desired impact on homelessness and to drive continuous improvement in service delivery and program design

A Point-in-Time count captures numbers and basic demographics of people experiencing homelessness at a single point in time. The province's goal for the count is to get as complete a count as possible of people experiencing homelessness on a single night for each Service Manager area. Gathering this data enables us to better understand the scope of homelessness in the Region and assists with service planning and targeting investments to supports for people experiencing homelessness.

## **The 2018 homelessness count found that 389 people were homeless in York Region**

In 2018, trained staff and volunteers visited 44 outdoor locations and 47 indoor locations across the Region where individuals who are experiencing homelessness were known to frequent. A total of 389 people were found to be experiencing homelessness.

Findings from the 2018 I Count informed service delivery, helped target investments to prevent and mitigate homelessness and shed light on the needs and barriers facing residents experiencing homelessness. Data was shared with community partners and agencies to support a coordinated approach to service delivery across the Region.

The 2018 I Count also informed the development of the Region's first By-Name List, which will continue to be maintained and adjusted, as needed, to meet the new provincial requirements. By having a By-Name List and an understanding of the most urgent needs of individuals and families, the Region and community partners can take critical steps towards helping people with the highest needs to find and keep housing, and work towards ending chronic homelessness in York Region.

The By-Name List has been used by the Region and our partners in prioritizing and referring individuals experiencing homelessness to the right supports and services. One example is the Home Now program. In 2019, this program provided individuals from the By-Name List with services that helped them find and keep housing, case management, housing supports, rent assistance and wraparound supports. In 2019, the Home Now program supported 63 unique clients and the program continues to support additional people as their situations change and they become homeless.

In 2020, due to the pandemic, the By-Name List was only one referral source used by the Region to match people with the right housing options. The 2021 Point-in-Time count will inform the refresh of the By-Name List to be aligned with the direction from the province.

Homelessness is a reality for a very small portion of York Region residents. With growing urbanization, the Point in Time count can identify emerging community needs and inform service design and partnerships. Table 1 shows the homeless count results from 2018 for York Region in comparison with other communities.

**Table 1**

**2018 Homeless Count Results from the Greater Toronto, Hamilton and Simcoe Area Jurisdictions**

| Municipality     | Population<br>Census 2016 | Total Number<br>of Homeless | Percentage of the<br>Total Population |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| City of Toronto  | 2,731,571                 | 8,715                       | 0.32                                  |
| Simcoe County*   | 479,650                   | 697                         | 0.15                                  |
| City of Hamilton | 536,917                   | 504                         | 0.09                                  |
| Peel Region      | 1,381,744                 | 875                         | 0.06                                  |
| Halton Region    | 548,435                   | 271                         | 0.05                                  |
| York Region      | 1,109,909                 | 389                         | 0.04                                  |

\*included City of Barrie and City of Orillia

**The Region will once again partner with United Way of Greater Toronto to conduct the homeless count**

On June 1 and 2, 2021, the Region will partner with the United Way of Greater Toronto to carry out this year's Point-in-Time count. The United Way of Greater Toronto is the community entity for the Federal homelessness funding program, Reaching Home and is also required to do a Point-in-Time count every two years. MMAH has worked to align with the federal Point-in-Time count requirements so that one count will once again meet both federal and provincial requirements.

There will be no tax levy impact as 100% of the costs for the 2021 Point-in-Time count will be funded through Phase Three of the Social Services Relief Fund.

The Province announced Phase Three of the Social Services Relief Fund on March 10, 2021 and the Region was allocated \$10.8 million, which must be spent before December 31, 2021.

**The 2021 Point-in-Time count will be different due to the pandemic**

In light of the pandemic, the 2021 Point-in-Time count will be a scaled down version of previous enumeration activities and will be conducted in accordance with Public Health Guidelines.

Numerous changes from the 2018 count will be made to reduce the risks during implementation. This includes refraining from the use of volunteers, ensuring that staff adhere to appropriate infection, prevention and control measures such as hand washing, maintaining physical distance and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

The 2021 count is an important opportunity to better understand the impact of the pandemic on people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and how their situations have changed since 2018. This will be important information to plan future services and advocate for related supports provided by other levels of government.

### **Continued understanding of homelessness in York Region is important and timely as the population changes and the pandemic continues**

By targeting investments and resources on prevention, diversion, wraparound and housing retention supports, while still making crisis supports available, the Region has been successful in helping people experiencing or at risk of homelessness move towards housing stability. The Region has redesigned existing supports and worked with partners to create new services to keep people experiencing or at risk of homelessness safe during the pandemic. The results of the 2021 homeless count and the lessons learned over the past year will help the Region continue to adjust programs and investments to meet the changing needs of people in our communities and support life and housing stability. A full report on the results of the 2021 Point-in-Time count will be provided to Council in 2022. This will include comparative results from municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.



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Katherine Chislett  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



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