

## Commissioner's Update

### September 17, 2021

**Purpose:** To provide HSPB Members a summary of Regional Actions relating to Human Services from June-September 2021.

Subject	Action	Subheading & Relevant Link to Report
<p><b>Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region</b></p>	<p>Following York Regional Council endorsement, in June 2021, to establish local community action tables (CATs) in each of four place-based focus areas previously approved by Council – Northern Georgina, Central Newmarket, South-Central Richmond Hill, and South-Central Markham –work is on track to launch the first CAT meetings this fall. CATs will coordinate and collaborate to develop an action plan and identify projects to address top risks to community safety and well-being over the short, medium, and longer term for incorporation into the Plan.</p> <p>As York Region supports establishment of CATs, United Way Greater Toronto will work closely with the Region as well as local community agencies and residents to provide additional backbone support to each table. This work builds on United Way's history of place-based investments in York Region, including its Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy.</p>	<p><a href="#">Update on the Development of a Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region</a></p>
<p><b>Community support and COVID-19 response</b></p>	<p><b>Vaccination</b></p> <p>York Region continues to make great strides in vaccination efforts, but there is more work to be done. Like the rest of Ontario, York Region is experiencing a fourth wave of the pandemic, due to the emergence of the highly contagious Delta variant, and it is predicted that case numbers will continue to rise into the fall.</p> <p>The Delta variant is more than twice as contagious as previous variants and doubles the risk of COVID-19 hospitalizations among the unvaccinated. It is the main contributor to the recent rise in cases throughout York Region.</p>	<p><a href="#">Update on Public Health Emergency Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic – September 7, 2021</a></p>

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	<p>York Region is proud of what has been accomplished regarding vaccinations to date. As of end of day September 7, 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 84.2% of eligible York Region residents (aged 12+) have received at least one dose</li><li>• 79.1% of eligible York Region residents (aged 12+) have received both doses</li></ul> <p>While reaching the last 10-15% of eligible residents will be a slow but steady process, the Region remains focused on targeting areas with lower vaccination rates and under-immunized groups. In an effort to be flexible, nimble, and strategic, the Region continues to operate numerous walk-in, pop-up vaccination clinics. Locations, dates, and times of operation are listed on the <a href="#">COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics</a> webpage.</p> <p>York Region's vaccination program is working. The overwhelming majority of cases today are among unvaccinated individuals. Transmission of COVID-19 is occurring within the community at events and gatherings. Even with some breakthrough COVID-19 cases among those already fully vaccinated, the vaccines are helping to mitigate the severity of the disease and minimize hospitalizations.</p> <p><b>Voluntary Isolation Shelter</b></p> <p>As part of the provincial High Priority Communities Strategy, the Region partnered with Canadian Red Cross and St. John Ambulance to operate a COVID-19 Voluntary Isolation Centre (the "Centre") from January to June 2021. Unlike the Self-isolation Shelter the Region established for people who are homeless (see below) and needing to quarantine, the Centre served people who had a home but could not safely remain in their home to quarantine, mostly due to the risk of infecting others in their household.</p> <p>The Centre helped 396 people self-isolate safely. A total of 91% of Centre guests came from neighbourhoods identified in the Province's High Priority Communities Strategy.</p> <p>York Region residents who need help to self-isolate can continue to access temporary, free-of-charge <a href="#">COVID-19 Voluntary Isolation Housing</a> located in and operated by Peel Region. Peel Region's Isolation Housing Program provides eligible guests with a private and safe hotel room. Transportation, also free-of-charge to and from Peel's facility, is available to York Region residents.</p>	
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	<p>Staff continue to monitor the situation and will adapt programs and services depending on community needs and in accordance with provincial direction. For the most up-to-date information, please visit the <a href="#">COVID-19</a> section on York Region's website.</p> <p>We thank our partners, including a Richmond Hill hotel, Canadian Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance.</p>	
<p><b>Mandatory vaccination policy for York Region staff</b></p>	<p>On August 30, 2021, York Region announced a new policy requiring all York Region staff to confirm receipt of two doses of a Health Canada-approved COVID-19 vaccine to ensure the best protection possible against COVID-19.</p> <p>Individuals with valid medical or other human rights-based exemptions will be considered for appropriate accommodation.</p> <p>Those who do not have a valid exemption and choose not to receive a complete vaccine series will be required to attend mandatory education on the benefits of vaccination. Unvaccinated staff with a valid exemption or awaiting a mandatory education session may be required to complete regular COVID-19 testing.</p> <p>This policy is similar to those being implemented in education and health care settings, as well as many other government and private organizations across the country.</p> <p>More stringent policies are in place for paramedics and long-term care staff, as required by the Province due to the type of care and contact involved in their work (see below). The Region is working with the School Boards and licensed child-care providers to ensure any Regional staff entering those facilities are compliant with their policies.</p> <p><b>Paramedic Vaccination</b></p> <p>On Tuesday, August 17, 2021 the Provincial government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, issued a new <a href="#">Directive #6</a> mandating all public hospitals, service providers, home and community care support service providers and ambulance services to implement a COVID-19 vaccination policy for employees, staff, contractors, students and volunteers.</p>	

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	<p>Effective immediately, York Region Paramedics must provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 or a documented valid exemption for grounds protected under the Human Rights Code (medical or religious) accepted by the employer by Monday, November 1, 2021.</p>	
<p><b>Homelessness programs providing a safe place to self-isolate and helping ensure safe spaces</b></p>	<p><b>Self-Isolation Shelter for People who are Homeless</b></p> <p>For people experiencing homelessness, York Region's Self-Isolation Shelter remains an important part of the COVID prevention program. The shelter provides a safe space to isolate while individuals are awaiting COVID-19 results, are confirmed positive and have mild symptoms, or are asymptomatic. As of August 9, 2021, the Self-Isolation Shelter supported 84 clients since the facility opened in April 2020. Thank you to our partners, including Blue Door, Toronto Region Conservation Authority, Bayshore Health Care, Gem Health Care, AC Nursing, Community Paramedics, Garda/Corp. Security, and York Region Public Health.</p> <p><b>Transition Shelter</b></p> <p>York Region's Transitional Shelter for people who are homeless and not needing to isolate also continues to operate, providing a range of supports to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Thank you to our partners at Kingbridge Hotel and Conference Centre, Salvation Army Housing and Support Services, York Regional Police, Krasman Centre, Garda and Corporate Security, GEM Health Care, community paramedics along with 2 local doctors (Dr. Henry and Dr. Meunier), York Region Public Health, and the Ontario Health COVID-19 Testing Implementation Team.</p> <p>As of August 9, 2021, the Transitional Shelter supported 998 clients since the facility opened in May 2020.</p> <p>On May 23, 2021, rapid testing was launched at the Transitional Shelter as one element of the ongoing Outbreak Prevention Management Strategy. Primary care, mental health, and addiction supports are also available to individuals at the Transitional Shelter in partnership with the Community Paramedicine team and virtual support from two York Region doctors. As of August 6, 2021, 75 clients had been provided with primary care, mental health, and/or addiction support at the Transitional Shelter.</p>	<p><a href="#">Emergency and Transitional Housing</a></p>

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	<p><b>Seasonal Shelters</b></p> <p>The Region's seasonal shelters (Inn from the Cold and Out of the Cold) were extended until the end of June 2021 to provide additional system capacity for individuals experiencing homelessness. In total, the seasonal shelters supported 260 individuals from January to June 2021.</p>	
<p><b>Process Enhancements to Streamline York Region's Subsidized Housing Wait List</b></p>	<p>The Region continues to implement process and technology enhancements to simplify management of York Region's subsidized housing wait list. This allows applicants to submit and manage their applications and more efficiently connect them to available rent subsidies through an online offer process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An online portal was launched in January 2021</li> <li>• Beginning in June 2021, existing applicants are being notified of the requirement to register for the online portal</li> <li>• A new process to offer rent subsidies, including community housing units and portable housing benefits, using the online portal will be phased in beginning in fall 2021.</li> <li>• Changes will improve service for applicants, reduce vacancy loss and position the Region to meet future provincial requirements</li> <li>• Direct support is available for applicants who need assistance navigating the new process</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Process Enhancements to Streamline York Region's Subsidized Housing Wait List</a></p>
<p><b>Providing critical supports to families</b></p>	<p><b>EarlyON Programs</b></p> <p>Throughout the different waves of the pandemic, EarlyON Programs provided virtual programming – such as live streamed sessions, parenting resources and supports, and individual parenting consultations – to those who needed them. Beginning in July 2021, a new virtual EarlyON program was developed to help childcare professionals and parents with young children identify and manage anxiety in children 2 to 6 years of age. This first program of its kind in Ontario and is being piloted by the Region.</p> <p>Several EarlyON programs began offering outdoor programs for children and caregivers that enabled small group participation and learning while adhering to Public Health guidelines. From January to July 2021, there were approximately 74,000 program visits by children/parents/guardians attending virtually and about 180 in-person program visits that occurred when outdoor programming resumed July 2021.</p>	<p><a href="#">EarlyON Child and Family Centres</a></p>

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	<p><b>Parent Information Sessions</b></p> <p>York Region early interventionists collaborated with community partners from Children’s Treatment Network and York Region’s Preschool Speech and Language Program and Infant Hearing Program to provide families with “Journey to School” parent information sessions to support them and their child’s transition to school. Two “Journey to School” events were delivered in June 2021, with a total of 33 participants, and a final “Journey to School” session was delivered in August 2021 with 15 additional families in attendance (total of 48 participants).</p> <p><b>Schools</b></p> <p>Public Health and the Region’s many partners have been busy with back-to-school planning and communications as schools have resumed in-person learning in recent weeks. The Region remains committed to keeping students and staff safe with a made-in-York Region school and child care screening tool and enhanced guidance, which can be found at <a href="http://york.ca/SafeAtSchool">york.ca/SafeAtSchool</a>. York Region’s <a href="#">School and Child Care Screening Tool</a> includes runny nose, sore throat, extreme tiredness, and muscle aches as additional symptoms that prevents students from entering a school or care facility, as these can be mild but often common symptoms of COVID-19 in children. The Region is taking this extra-cautious approach, above and beyond the current <a href="#">provincial list</a> of symptoms, to prevent potential cases of COVID-19 from entering schools in the first place.</p> <p><b>Immunization of School Aged Children and Catch Up Immunizations</b></p> <p>York Region continues to promote <a href="#">pop-up locations in school locations</a>, offering convenient, vaccination accessible clinics to staff, students and families. No appointment is necessary, and first and second doses are available.</p>	
<p><b>Long-term care and support for seniors</b></p>	<p><b>Newmarket Health Center and Maple Health Center</b></p> <p>The Region’s two long-term care homes (the Homes) launched a COVID-19 immunization policy on July 1, 2021 in response to a Minister’s Directive that requires staff, students, and volunteers to either provide COVID-19 vaccination records, a medical exemption to the Homes, or complete an education program on the benefits of vaccination.</p>	<p><a href="#">Minister’s Directive: Long-term care home COVID-19 immunization policy</a></p>

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	<p>As of July 31, 2021, 81% of staff and 94% of residents were fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the Newmarket Health Centre, and 82% of staff and 98% of residents were fully vaccinated for COVID-19 in the Maple Health Centre.</p> <p><b>Provincial Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission</b></p> <p>York Region staff are working on an October 2021 report to Regional Council on the findings and implications of the <a href="#">Ontario LTC COVID-19 Commission's Final Report</a>. Staff engaged internal and external stakeholders in July and August, including the Seniors Cluster Table and HSPB member volunteers, to seek input on the implications of the recommendations and to identify opportunities for further coordinated advocacy efforts with the province. There are plans to consult later this fall with Seniors Cluster Table members and interested HSPB members on the Seniors Strategy Refresh. Further information will be communicated to those HSPB members who have indicated interest in participating. <u>If you'd like to be added to this process please let staff know after this meeting.</u></p> <p><b>Supporting Seniors</b></p> <p>Housing Services partnered with Vaughan Community Health Centre to support seniors living in community housing to build skills in and comfort with using technology to stay connected to friends, family, and virtual programs during the pandemic. Between April and July 2021, 16 sessions were held.</p> <p>Further supports have been provided by Community Paramedicine's CP@Clinic program that expanded its services from two to five seniors' buildings with higher call volumes to provide weekly assessments, identify risk factors, as well as health promotion and referrals. From April to August 2021, 270 clients were seen across the five CP@Clinic sites.</p>	
<p><b>Monitoring community needs by tracking resident inquiries to</b></p>	<p>Since HSPB's last meeting, health-related concerns continue to comprise the largest category of resident inquiries to Access York and 211/Findhelp. Among 8,721 inquiries to Access York between July 25-August 7, 2021, 5,953 (68%) were related to health with housing (544 inquiries, or 6%) and financial assistance (490 inquiries, or 6%) rounding out the top-three categories of human services inquiries.</p>	<p><a href="#">211/Findhelp Snapshots</a></p>

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<p><b>Access York and 211/Findhelp</b></p>	<p>For 211/Findhelp over the same time period, there were 216 inquiries, of which 32 (15%) were classified as information services, 31 (14%) to mental health/addictions, 29 (13%) to health, 20 (9%) to individual/family services, and 18 (8%) to income support/financial assistance. Central themes emerging from the 211/Findhelp service navigation data include: food security/meals and grocery delivery; in-home vaccinations; housing help – rent, hydro, and evictions; and youth mental health supports.</p>	
<p><b>Federal government COVID-19 support measures</b></p>	<p>On July 30, 2021, the federal government announced extension of COVID-19 support measures until October 23, 2021 in recognition of uneven economic reopening across regions and sectors. These extensions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The eligibility period for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Lockdown Support</li> <li>• The Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB), and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB)</li> <li>• Increasing the maximum number of weeks available for the Canada Recovery Benefit by an additional 4 weeks to a total of 54 weeks at a rate of \$300 per week, and ensuring it is available to those who have exhausted employment insurance (EI) benefits.</li> </ul> <p>As recipients of temporary federal COVID-19 support measures exhaust these benefits by October 2021, they may turn to Ontario Works, if eligible. This may result in an increase in social assistance applications and caseloads. The federal government has not indicated a further extension of these programs as the fourth wave evolves.</p>	<p><a href="#">Government extends COVID-19 benefits and business supports to support stronger economic recovery</a></p>
<p><b>Ontario Social Services Relief Fund</b></p>	<p>The Province announced the fourth and final phase of the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) on August 16, 2021. York Region will receive an additional \$12,100,900 to be spent by March 31, 2022.</p> <p>This phase of funding ensures Service Managers can continue to provide vital services established to address the impacts of COVID-19. Including this fourth phase of funding, as of August 2021, York Region has received at total of \$44.4 million from the SSRF.</p> <p>Regional actions supported through the SSRF include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Emergency Housing and Violence Against Women:</b> To invest in projects such as creating self-isolation spaces, providing mental health supports, personal protective equipment and</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Ontario Providing More Support to Communities During COVID-19</a></p>



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	<p>cleaning services, and second stage housing. The funds provided are available until December 31, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Krasman Centre Drop-by Services:</b> Extended hours as of July 2021 to provide access for basic needs, peer support in virtual, and in-person format at the Transitional Shelter and Newmarket Drop-By, referrals to community services and harm reduction support.</li> <li>• <b>360kids' Youth Isolation Pods:</b> This program started in July 2021 and will run until December 31, 2021, providing a safe space for youth to self-isolate prior to entering emergency or transitional housing. This program allows youth to access services throughout self-isolation that are designed to meet their unique needs.</li> <li>• <b>Leeder Place Isolation Space for Families:</b> This program started in April 2021 and provides a safe space for families to self-isolate prior to entering emergency housing. This program will run until December 31, 2021.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>COVID Community Coordination (3C) Tables</b></p>	<p>York Region/United Way Greater Toronto COVID-19 Community Coordination Initiative – or “3C” – continues to be instrumental for knowledge mobilization, networking, and collaboration to provide needed resources in the community. Staff are exploring options for the future state of the Table including how it might evolve to address recovery from the pandemic, and longer-term strategic planning.</p>	
<p><b>Leveraging the Community Investment Fund (CIF) to support local agencies and help vulnerable residents</b></p>	<p>In 2021, approved Community Investment Fund (CIF) project funding of \$5.8 million was implemented to help support over 40 projects. An additional one-time injection of \$1 million for COVID-related relief was approved by Regional Council for non-profit agencies through the CIF. This COVID-19 CIF Relief Funding supported 33 projects, delivered by 29 community agencies, and addressed increased service demand for mental health, housing stability, and food security supports.</p> <p>York Region staff conducted a CIF program review to identify program improvement opportunities and future-state ideas. This work is on track to bring forward recommendations to Regional Council in an October 2021 report. Pending Council approval, implementation of the updated program will begin in 2022.</p>	
<p><b>Truth and Reconciliation and Addressing</b></p>	<p>York Region remains committed to creating welcoming and inclusive communities by learning from the mistakes of the past. Alongside the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, on whose traditional territory we reside, York Region continues to be an ally for change.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>York Region celebrates Black History Month</u></a></p>

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<p><b>anti-Black racism</b></p>	<p>York Region believes it is our collective responsibility to learn more about the residential school system in Canada and its detrimental effects on Indigenous Peoples. York Region is observing the National Day for Truth &amp; Reconciliation on September 30, 2021 by planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A virtual sharing circle for Indigenous staff led by an elder, providing an opportunity for Indigenous staff to gather and share</li><li>• Education sessions for allies focused on Indigenous history and peoples, truth and reconciliation and allyship, supported by self-directed learning, reflection and community resources</li></ul> <p>York Region continues its ongoing efforts to address anti-Black racism in our organization and our community through the corporate framework for action to address anti-Black racism, approved by our Senior Management Team in October 2020.</p> <p>Over the over the last 10 months, the Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Released a formal acknowledgement and denouncement of systemic anti-Black racism and commitment to take immediate action to address it (March 2021)</li><li>• Launched an employee demographic survey, the data of which is currently being analyzed (June 2021)</li><li>• Created an Anti-Black Racism Advisory Group, grounded on the principle of Nothing About Us Without Us. (Nov 2020)</li><li>• Met with the various Black-focused, Black-led, Black-serving (B3) community organizations in York Region individually this summer – a key action of our corporate framework to address anti-Black racism with the purpose of establishing relationships, learning about their priorities, and identifying opportunities and alignments.</li><li>• Developed supports for Black staff including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The Region's inaugural Black History Month celebrations in February 2021, followed by Emancipation Day celebrations in August 2021</li><li>○ An employee resource group (called Community of Belonging) for Black staff, with groups for other staff to follow in the coming months.</li></ul></li></ul>	<p><a href="#">York Region marks Canada's first national Emancipation Day</a></p>
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