



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: September 23, 2021

Re: Social Service Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic – Q2 and Q3
2021 Update

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 provided [May 2020](#), [June 2020](#), [July 2020](#), [September 2020](#) and [November 2020](#). A Q1 2021 update was provided [April 2021](#).

This memorandum provides an update to the April 2021 memo and includes updates from Q2 and Q3 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 are provided in Attachment 1, organized by the goals of the Social Service Response:

1. Monitor current and emerging trends
2. Adapt and enhance core services to meet growing and evolving 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 community needs
6. Obtain provincial and federal funding commitments to support activities

The Province remains in Step 3 of the Reopening Ontario Road Map as communities monitor early days of 4th wave of the pandemic

The Region entered a Province-wide shut down on April 3, 2021 and on April 8, 2021 a province-wide [emergency and stay-at-home order](#) was put into place requiring everyone to remain at home. The Province began to reopen in June using a [Three-Step Roadmap to Safely Reopen the Province](#) and moved into step one on [June 11, 2021](#), step two on [June 30, 2021](#) and step three on [July 16, 2021](#).

The Province currently remains in [Step 3](#) and on August 17, 2021 the province, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, [paused the Roadmap to Reopen](#) in response to evolving data around the Delta variant and based on the recent experiences of other jurisdictions.

The Region is currently in the 4th wave of the pandemic, and after a steady increase in cases, a general plateauing is emerging and will be monitored closely should the trajectory increase or decrease. Staff will adapt programs and services depending on community needs and in accordance with provincial direction.

Federal income supports have been extended until October 23, 2021

On [July 30, 2021](#), the federal government announced extension of COVID-19 support measures in recognition of uneven economic reopening across regions and sectors.

These extensions include:

- Extending the eligibility period for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Lockdown Support until October 23, 2021
- Extending the Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit until October 23, 2021
- 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 their Employment Insurance benefits

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 caseload. The federal government has not indicated a further extension of these programs. Staff will continue to monitor any changes and potential impacts on demand for social assistance.

Health-related inquiries make up the majority of resident calls followed by social assistance

- Health-related concerns continued to remain the largest category of resident inquiries to Access York and 211/Findhelp. Inquiries on health-related topics between March and August 2021 reached a peak of 56,503 in June 2021 (92% of all inquiries). In comparison, the peak number in the previous six months (September 2020 to February 2021) was reached in October with 8,031 inquiries (49%). The majority of these calls were inquiries related to vaccination clinics
- Between March and August 2021, social assistance-related calls were the second largest category of inquiries. However, the proportion of calls related to social assistance decreased to 2 to 3%, down from 18 to 25% in the previous six months (September 2020 to February 2021)

New virtual supports are available for families and young children

- A new virtual EarlyON pilot program was developed to help child care professionals and parents with young children identify and manage anxiety in children aged 2 to 6 years old. This is the first program of its kind in Ontario. The program provides staff, parents and caregivers with key strategies that help children manage anxiety. 90% of those surveyed felt more confident after attending the training to be able to support children. Individual and group sessions for families began in July 2021

The Self-Isolation Shelter second cabin has closed

- The Self-Isolation Shelter remains an important part of the COVID prevention program for people experiencing homelessness. The shelter provides a safe space to isolate while they are awaiting COVID-19 results, are confirmed positive and have mild symptoms, or are asymptomatic
- Due to low demand, the Self-Isolation Shelter's second cabin closed on September 17, 2021. This cabin can be reopened within a few weeks notice, should additional space be required. The first cabin, which remains open, can support up to 11 people

York Region's Voluntary Isolation Centre closed in June 2021

- As part of the provincial [High Priority Communities Strategy](#), the Region successfully established and operated a COVID-19 Voluntary Isolation Centre (the "Centre") from January to June 2021. The Canadian Red Cross has been a valuable partner in the operation of the Centre, and in April 2021, York Region also partnered with St. John Ambulance to provide wellness checks and other supports for Centre guests

- The Centre helped 396 people safely self-isolate. In conjunction with the end of funding from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and reflective of reduced demand due to decreasing case numbers, the Centre closed on June 30, 2021
- Following the closure of the Centre in June, York Region partnered with Peel Region to facilitate the diversion of any future York Region residents needing to self-isolate to Peel Region's COVID-19 Voluntary Isolation Housing, which continues to be operational

Paramedic and Seniors Services have implemented new COVID-19 immunization policies in response to provincial directives

- The Region's two long-term care homes, Newmarket Health Centre and Maple Health Centre, and the Adult Day Programs at Maple and Keswick have implemented mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policies in response to a [Minister's Directive](#) (for long-term care homes) and [Directive #6](#) (for adult day programs). These policies require all staff, students, volunteers and contractors to either provide their COVID-19 immunization records or have an approved exemption by November 1, 2021
- As of August 31, 2021, 88% of staff and 99% of residents are fully immunized for COVID-19 in Newmarket Health Centre and 88% of staff and 96% of residents are fully immunized for COVID-19 in Maple Health Centre. Vaccine uptake continues to be encouraged for staff and caregivers who have not yet been vaccinated
- In addition, all York Region paramedics, community paramedics and student paramedics must comply with the York Region Paramedic Services COVID-19 Vaccination Policy implemented in response to provincial Directive #6
- Paramedics must provide proof of full vaccination by November 1, 2021 and paramedic students must provide proof of full vaccination by September 27, 2021 to continue their placement

The Community Paramedicine Team and York Region's Outreach Team continue to provide primary care and mental health and addictions support for people experiencing homelessness

- York Region's Outreach Team works with people living outside to encourage and support them to access safe housing options, such as the Region's Transitional Shelter
- Through an innovative partnership with York Region's Outreach Team, Community Paramedics are providing assessments, referrals and harm reduction supplies to meet the primary care needs of people experiencing homelessness and living in encampments
- As of September 27, 2021, this program has supported 40 clients staying in encampments

COVID-19 Community Investment Fund Relief Funding provided additional support to community agencies

- In March 2021, Council approved an additional one-time \$1 million in COVID-19 Community Investment Fund Relief Funding as part of the Region's 2021 budget
- COVID-19 Community Investment Fund Relief Funding is supporting 33 projects, delivered by 29 community agencies, that address increased service demand for mental health, housing stability and food security assistance
- Staff are currently assessing the potential need for additional Community Investment funding as part of the 2022 budget process to continue addressing pandemic-related community needs

York Region received an additional \$12 million in Social Services Relief Funding from the Province

- The Province announced the fourth and final phase of the Social Services Relief Fund on [August 16, 2021](#)
- This phase of funding ensures Service Managers are able to continue vital services that were established to address the impacts of COVID-19 and enables an orderly wind-down of programs as provincial funds come to an end. Capital costs will be permitted as an eligible expense
- York Region received an additional \$12,100,900. Funds applied to operating projects must be spent by March 31, 2022. Capital projects must be committed by December 31, 2021 and completed by March 31, 2023
- Table 1 provides an overview of the four phases of the Social Services Relief Fund. Attachment 1 provides information about the funded projects

Table 1
Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) Overview

Phase	Purpose	Allocation Received (\$ Millions)	Funding Conditions
SSRF Phase One	<p>Support a range of vulnerable populations, including people living in community housing, 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 (e.g., Self Isolation Shelter and Transitional Shelter)</p>	4.98 (Mar. 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating projects only • Region spent all funding as of November 2020
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>	16.55 (8.42 in Oct 2020 and 8.13 in Dec. 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital projects were eligible for both allocations of Phase 2 funding • Region spent all operating funding as of March 31, 2021 • Capital funding must be spent by December 31, 2021
SSRF Phase Three	<p>Facilitate continuation of Phase Two operating projects to maintain and improve infection prevention and control measures in congregate care settings and ensure stability in homelessness sector by continuing current supports</p>	10.77 (Mar. 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating projects only • Funding must be spent by December 31, 2021
SSRF Phase Four	<p>Continue vital services that were established to address the impacts of COVID-19 and enables an orderly wind-down of these programs as provincial funds come to an end</p>	12.10 (Aug. 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating funding must be spent by March 31, 2022 • Capital projects must be committed by December 31, 2021 and completed by March 31, 2023
Total (as of August 2021)		44.4	

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.



Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (1)
eDOCS #13147031