



Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services and Chief Planner
Approach to Developing York Region's 2025 to 2035 Housing and Homelessness Plan

1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk forward this report to local Members of Parliament, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, local Members of Provincial Parliament and Clerks of the local municipalities.

2. Purpose

This report provides Council with an update on development of York Region's next 10-year housing and homelessness plan anticipated to be brought to Council in Q2 2025, and implementation plans for each segment of the housing continuum in 2024 that will inform the 10-year housing and homelessness plan.

The 10-year housing and homelessness plan will be informed by work underway on three implementation plans to address needs across the Region's housing continuum; [Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan](#), [Community Housing Development Master Plan](#) and [Homelessness Service System Plan](#), each planned for Council's consideration in 2024. A new strategic plan for the Region's housing corporation, Housing York Inc. is also underway.

Key Points:

- As a Service Manager, York Region is required by the Province to develop and maintain a 10-year housing and homelessness plan. The Region's first plan, *Housing Solutions*, was approved by Council in [June 2014](#) and significantly updated in [October 2019](#).
- York Region's next housing and homelessness plan for 2025-2035 is targeted to be brought forward to Council in Q2 2025. Staff will continue to advance the goals and

priorities of *Housing Solutions* until the new 10-year housing and homelessness plan is developed.

- The next 10-year housing and homelessness plan will be informed by the implementation plans currently underway and to be brought forward to Council over Q2 and Q3 2024. These include the Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan, Community Housing Development Master Plan and Homelessness Service System Plan.

3. Background

Region is required by the Province to develop and maintain a 10-year housing and homelessness plan

As a Service Manager, York Region is required by the *Housing Services Act, 2011* to develop and maintain a 10-year housing and homelessness plan addressing local housing and homelessness needs. The Act prescribes specific requirements for the plans, including:

- An assessment of current and future housing needs within the service area
- Objectives and targets relating to housing needs
- Measures proposed to meet objectives and targets
- Other matters as may be prescribed by the Province

Additional direction is provided by the Province through the [Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans](#), last updated in 2016.

Council approved the first 10-year housing and homelessness plan in 2014 and a significant update in 2019, with annual progress reports to Council

The Region's first 10-year housing and homelessness plan, [Housing Solutions: A place for everyone](#), was approved in [June 2014](#). Service Managers are required to review plans every five years. Council approved an [update](#) to the plan following a review in [October 2019](#), with updated goals and objectives to address increasing community needs, including:

1. Increase the supply of affordable and rental housing
2. Help people find and keep housing
3. Strengthen the housing and homelessness system

Service Managers must report publicly each year on progress achieved in advancing their 10-year plans. This report is brought to Council each June with a summary of outcomes achieved

in the previous year, updates on performance and system indicators and an action plan for the following year. Council received the 2022 progress report and 2023 action plan in [June 2023](#).

Council will receive the final progress report on the current plan in June 2024. The report will summarize key outcomes achieved since 2019 and analyze 5-year trends.

4. Analysis

Significant changes continue to impact York Region's housing and homelessness system, which must be addressed through the Region's next 10-year plan

Since Council approved the updated *Housing Solutions* plan in 2019, housing market pressures and resident needs have continued to increase. In response, Council declared a housing affordability crisis in [February 2021](#). The following describes the current environment:

- The Region continues to face growing housing unaffordability and limited rental supply, with a rental vacancy rate of just 1% in 2022, well below the healthy rate of 3%.
- Demand for subsidized housing continues to grow, with 2,400 new eligible applications added to the Region's subsidized housing wait list in 2022, and supply is not keeping up. As of December 31, 2022, there were 14,867 households on the subsidized housing wait list, with about 371 applicants housed annually on average between 2008 and 2022.
- The number of people experiencing homelessness in York Region, and across Ontario, is increasing. The Region's emergency and transitional housing facilities are consistently at or near capacity.
- Increased numbers of asylum seekers continue to place additional pressures on emergency and transitional housing facilities.
- The By-Name List is a real-time list of known people experiencing homelessness who have connected with a homelessness service or support in York Region. In December 2023, 848 unique people were on the By-Name List, compared to 552 unique people in December 2022, an increase of 54%.
- The number of people receiving on Ontario Works benefits in York Region increased by 25% between December 2022 and 2023.

Region continues to advocate for increased Federal and Provincial funding to expand the supply of affordable and community housing

Senior levels of government remain critical partners for achieving commitments set out in the Region's housing and homelessness plan. Since the revised plan was approved by Council in 2019, the funding landscape for housing and homelessness initiatives has continued to evolve. Recent Federal and Provincial initiatives, like the Housing Accelerator Fund and the Building Faster Fund, have focused on local municipal efforts to increase the supply of housing. As an

upper-tier municipality the Region is ineligible for these programs and has advocated to senior levels of government to be made eligible.

Provincial changes as a result of Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* (Bill 23) now require municipalities to phase in their Council approved development charges rates and provide development charges discounts for rental housing and, once proclaimed, exemptions for affordable and attainable housing. Bill 23 also removed Housing Services as a development charge-eligible service, effective November 28, 2022. Removal of this service means the Region can no longer collect development charges for this service. The Region's 2022 Development Charges Bylaw had included \$109 million to help fund the growth-related share of the cost to construct approximately 1,500 new community housing units over the next 10 years. Collectively, the changes currently in effect would reduce development charge collections needed to fund vital housing enabling infrastructure, by about \$700 million over the next ten years.

The Province increased York Region's Homelessness Prevention Program funding to \$36.7 million in 2023, up from \$20.8 million in 2022. This additional funding is intended to address Provincial funding shortfalls, as identified by the Ontario Auditor General's 2021 Value for Money Audit on homelessness programs.

The Region has continued to advocate for Federal and Provincial funding to support the increased number of asylum seekers, including a [January 2024](#) Council motion requesting an increased Federal allocation under the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit and additional funding to address the asylum seeker response.

Province is reviewing requirements for 10-year housing and homelessness plans

The current Policy Statement for Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans was last updated by the previous Provincial government as part of its Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. It does not reflect housing-related priorities and programs advanced by the current government, including annual Housing Supply Action Plans, Community Housing Renewal Strategy and new consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program. The Policy Statement articulates responsibility for Service Managers to address homelessness, roles of non-profit and co-operative community housing providers and the private market. It does not reflect recent legislative changes made by the current government, such as changes introduced under Bill 23.

Provincial staff have indicated the Province is reviewing 10-year plan requirements, and updated guidance is expected in 2024. While potential changes are unknown at this time, several of the Ontario Auditor General's 2021 audit recommendations pointed to a lack of Provincially prescribed standardized outcomes and indicators for Service Managers to collect, track, and report through local 10-year housing and homelessness plans. Updated Provincial direction will be important for completing the next plan in 2025, as the plan must meet Provincial requirements. Staff will continue to monitor any changes to the policy statement. The scope of the Provincial review may impact timing for the new plan, currently targeted for Q2 2025.

While implementation plans and a refreshed 10-year plan are under development, staff are continuing to deliver on the priorities identified within the current plan

As the new plan is being developed, staff continue to advance priorities and goals identified within the current plan, as they remain relevant to the needs of York Region residents. This includes ongoing efforts to build new community housing, continuing the Development Charges deferral policy for purpose-built rental, delivering programs that support households on the subsidized housing wait list and By-Name List, and advancing initiatives to strengthen the overall housing and homelessness system. The new 10-year housing and homelessness plan will reaffirm Council’s commitments outlined in the implementation plans and will respond to any additional Provincial requirements for 10-year plans identified through the current Provincial review.

Housing implementation plans currently underway will inform the next 10-year plan

Council has endorsed development of targeted plans to address the housing continuum including homelessness, community housing and market housing. Housing and homelessness plans must be informed by needs assessments and consultations; this work began in 2023 and continues this year. An overview of York Region’s housing continuum and details on the three implementation plans are provided in Figure 1

Figure 1

York Region Housing Continuum and Related Implementation Plans



The [Homelessness Service System Plan](#) is targeted to be brought forward to Council in Q2/Q3 2024 and will respond to immediate and long-term needs of residents experiencing or at-risk of

homelessness. Work has included preliminary consultations with stakeholders to outline initial direction and priorities, and additional consultations with local municipalities, community partners and people with lived experience are currently underway. A Special Meeting of Regional Council was held [November 2023](#) to inform Council about the growing challenges in York Region, actions being taken and new approaches.

The Community Housing Development Master Plan will guide long-term investments to increase the supply of community housing, including Housing York Inc. Since Council initially approved the development of the master plan in [November 2021](#), legislative and regulatory changes to the *Housing Services Act* and Bill 23 have required staff to reconsider the direction and scope. The master plan is targeted to be brought forward to Council in Q3 2024 and will be informed by a needs assessment and consultations with community housing providers and local municipalities to establish key targets and objectives.

The [Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan](#) will identify actions, advocacy and partnership approaches to private market housing gaps in the short, medium and long-term. Work has included completing a needs assessment, conducting consultations with key stakeholders and developing strategic directions and options presented to the Housing Affordability Task Force in January 2024. The proposed Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan will be brought forward to Council in Q2/Q3 2024.

Actions endorsed by Council under each plan will be consolidated into the next 10-year housing and homelessness plan. The 10-year housing and homelessness plan will serve as an overarching implementation road map setting out short, medium and long-term actions to be completed over the next 10 years to achieve key targets and objectives for measuring progress. The 10-year housing and homelessness plan will also provide a renewed housing advocacy position for the Region, based on updated needs assessments and Council-endorsed targets, recognizing the Region cannot address its housing challenges without partnerships with senior levels of government.

A new strategic plan is also being developed for Housing York Inc., in consultation with the Board of Directors, as the current plan ends in 2024. Actions identified through that work will also be used to inform the 10-year housing and homelessness plan where appropriate.

Region's new 10-year housing and homelessness plan will advance the 2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan priority of supporting community well-being

Each of the implementation plans, as well as the new 10-year housing and homelessness plan, will advance the Region's [2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan: From Vision to Results](#). The strategic plan contains a number of key measures that will be reflected in the plans, including increasing the number of community housing units and rent benefits administered by the Region, and increasing the percentage of individuals and families remaining stably housed after six months who were experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. Commitments identified through the plans will be used to inform future budgets and updates to the 10-year capital plan.

5. Financial Considerations

In 2024, the Region is investing \$173 million in operating and \$24 million in capital funding into housing and homelessness priorities

Total gross expenditures in the 2024 operating budget for Housing and Homelessness Community Programs are \$173 million, of which \$93 million (54%) is funded by tax levy. The remaining expenditures are funded by senior government funding (\$56 million), regional reserves (\$14 million) and contributions from Housing York Inc. (\$10 million).

Total gross expenditures in the 2024 capital budget for Housing are \$24 million. \$19 million (79%) is funded by senior government funding, with the remaining \$5 million funded by regional reserves. These investments are being used to support construction of new community housing, deliver rent subsidy programs, and strengthen homelessness, housing stability, diversion and outreach programs.

Included in the 2024 operating budget is \$4.7 million under Housing to support the new Community Housing Supply Grant Pilot Program and \$4.8 million under Homelessness Community Programs to support seasonal shelters, cold and warm weather response, outreach and expand rapid rehousing subsidies. These investments were added to the Community and Health Services budget by Council in February 2023 as part of a \$12.8 million investment to address critical issues impacting regional residents. \$4.8 million is fully funded by increases in Provincial funding in Homelessness Community Programs, with \$2.5 million funded by tax levy and the remaining \$2.2 million funded by the Pandemic Management and Recovery Reserve.

Any cost impacts beyond 2024 will be addressed through the budget process as required. Implementation plans currently under development will include additional evidence-based funding requests backed by business cases.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are critical partners in advancing the priorities of Housing Solutions by enabling development of affordable housing options and responding to homelessness. Local municipalities will continue to be engaged throughout 2024 as the Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan, Community Housing Development Master Plan, Homelessness Service System Plan, and the next 10-year housing and homelessness plan are being developed.

7. Conclusion

A new 10-year housing and homelessness plan is being developed, targeted for Council's consideration in Q2 2025, which will be informed by the implementation plans currently underway. While the new 10-year plan is being developed, staff will continue to work towards

the goals and objectives of *Housing Solutions* to continue supporting residents to find and keep affordable housing and address homelessness.

For more information on this report, please contact Karen Antonio-Hadcock, Acting General Manager, Housing Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72088 or Sandra Malcic, Director, Planning Policy and Data at ext. 75274. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



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