

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Community and Health Services
June 13, 2019

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2018 Progress Report and Development of Phase 2 Action Plan

1. Recommendations

Council receive this report for information.

2. Summary

This report provides a summary of progress made to date towards achieving the goals and actions identified in York Region's first 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, [Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone](#). Each year staff report to Council on progress made in implementing the plan and the progress report is made publically available as required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. Now that the Plan is half-way through its ten year timeframe, it is being reviewed. This report also provides information about the work underway on the review and some initial research findings.

Key Points:

- Between 2014 and 2018, York Region made significant progress in implementing the majority of the *Housing Solutions* actions; highlights are summarized in this report
- The *Housing Services Act, 2011* requires the Region to complete a review and update of *Housing Solutions* every five years
- The five-year review and update provides an opportunity to assess current housing needs in York Region and address new initiatives and changes introduced by senior levels of government
- Findings from community consultations, housing market data, and the April 2018 homelessness enumeration will inform the updated action plan
- An updated action plan for 2019 to 2023, including a detailed work plan for the first two years, will be presented to Council in fall 2019

3. Background

Council approved York Region’s first Housing and Homelessness Plan in June 2014

As Service Manager, York Region is required by the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (the Act) to develop and implement a 10-Year plan to address local housing and homelessness needs. Council approved the first 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, [Housing Solutions: A place for everyone](#) (*Housing Solutions*) in [June 2014](#). The Act also requires the Region to report publicly on its actions and progress toward the objectives set out in *Housing Solutions* each year, and to complete a review at least every five years and update the plan if necessary.

***Housing Solutions* sets out four goals that address the housing system as a whole**

The four goals (Figure 1) and 49 actions set out in *Housing Solutions* focus on building complete communities with a range of affordable housing options and strengthening the Region’s homelessness and housing stability system. The *Housing Solutions* action plan is organized into two five-year phases. Each action includes a target for completion in either Phase 1 (years one to five) or Phase 2 (years five to 10). Some are longer-term initiatives intended to be carried out over the 10-year implementation term.

Figure 1
***Housing Solutions* Goals**



The five-year review of *Housing Solutions* began in 2018 and will result in an updated action plan

The Act requires Service Managers to review their local housing and homelessness plans at least once every five years and make amendments as necessary. The Province has directed Service Managers to submit a report on their five-year reviews and updated plans to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by December 31, 2019. The five-year review and update of *Housing Solutions* was initiated in summer 2018, and will result in substantial revisions to the Phase 2 action plan as the majority of the original actions have already been completed.

This process is also an opportunity to review and incorporate the impacts of new senior government initiatives. These include [provincial housing policy changes](#) as a result of the change in government that took place in June 2018, as well as opportunities under the federal [National Housing Strategy](#) released in November 2017.

As part of the five-year review and update of local housing and homelessness plans, Service Managers must prepare a summary of their actions between 2014 and 2018. To meet this requirement, this report presents an overview of the Region's Phase 1 achievements and outlines the key findings from the review. In previous years, the annual Progress Report has been reported jointly with the Region's Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Report. The 2018 Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Report will be presented to Council in June 2019, as a separate report because this year the 2018 Progress Report goes beyond an annual update to also include a multi-year review and next steps.

4. Analysis

2018 *Housing Solutions* progress included incentives for affordable rental housing, help for people waiting for subsidized housing, and enhancing supports for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

In 2018, progress toward the *Housing Solutions* action plan included the following:

- Council endorsed Draft Rental Incentives Guidelines in [June 2018](#), following evaluation and recommendations developed in 2017 by the York Region/Local Municipal Housing Working Group
- A comprehensive review of the subsidized housing wait list was initiated to support policy and practice enhancements and better connect applicants with programs and services. Results of the review will be reported to Council in fall 2019
- York Region participated in development of a provincial Inclusionary Zoning Regulation, including providing comments on the draft regulation to the Province and other groups such as Association of Municipalities of Ontario and hosting a special session of the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario Affordable Housing Group to ensure alignment across the municipal sector

- The first Region-led homeless enumeration was conducted in spring 2018. [I Count – I'm not just a number](#) included a survey to gain a better understanding of who is homeless in York Region and their needs and barriers
- Development and implementation of a Coordinated Access System to help people access homelessness and housing stability services more quickly began in 2018, informed by best practices research and community consultations that took place in 2017

Between 2014 and 2018, all 28 of the Phase One actions and six of the nine Phase Two actions in *Housing Solutions* were completed or initiated

Over the past five years, the Region has made significant progress toward the original *Housing Solutions* action plan. All of the Phase 1 actions were either completed or underway by the end of the 2014 to 2018 term of Council, with most completed as of 2017. Attachment 1 highlights key *Housing Solutions* actions completed or initiated between 2014 and 2018.

Although Phase 2 of *Housing Solutions* covers the years 2019 to 2023, by December 31, 2018, progress has already been made on six of the nine actions. Through the review and update of *Housing Solutions*, the nine Phase 2 actions and 12 “ongoing” actions may be amended to ensure that they continue to align with Regional and community priorities and reflect the work that has already taken place.

A needs assessment conducted as part of the five-year review identified increasing affordability challenges and ongoing service gaps, as well as opportunities to build on the Phase 1 accomplishments

Between September 2018 and January 2019 a range of stakeholders participated in workshops, focus groups and surveys to review the existing *Housing Solutions* goals, identify current housing and homelessness issues in York Region, and discuss the outcomes they would like to see by the end of Phase 2. Consultation participants included service providers, non-profit and private sector housing providers, local municipal and Regional staff, people with lived experience of homelessness and members of the community.

The key housing and homelessness issues identified through the consultation process include:

- A need for more subsidized and affordable housing, including affordable market rental housing, as well as more diversity in the supply of affordable housing options to meet residents’ needs at different ages and stages of life
- A need for more supports to help residents maintain their long-term housing stability
- Ongoing service gaps for residents who need supportive housing or other health care supports to maintain safe and stable housing

- Opportunities to continue to build community capacity to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to find and keep housing

The consultation findings align with housing market data, the Region's [ongoing affordability monitoring](#), and findings from the [2018 / Count homelessness enumeration](#). The needs and ongoing challenges identified through the community consultations are consistent with what was heard during development of the original *Housing Solutions* action plan.

High housing costs and limited diversity in the housing stock make it difficult for many York Region residents to afford appropriate housing

Housing costs in York Region have risen faster than residents' incomes. Between 2008 and 2018, average family income increased by 13 per cent, while resale home prices in York Region increased by 112 per cent. Very few housing options are affordable to residents with incomes in the sixth income decile and below. For York Region, households in the sixth income decile in 2018 had a gross annual household income of \$122,290 or less. These households are more likely to spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs, which is considered to not be affordable, and which can increase vulnerability to crisis and limit opportunities to save and plan for the future.

While new rental units were built during Phase 1 of *Housing Solutions*, including 327 units completed by Housing York Inc. and 340 private purpose-built rental units, vacancy rates in York Region remained below the three per cent benchmark used to define a "healthy" rental market. Between 2014 and 2018 the vacancy rate for York Region ranged from 1.3 per cent to 1.7 per cent.

In addition to pressures created by the lack of rental housing in general, the majority of York Region's rental housing supply is in the secondary market, which provides less security of tenure, with most of the growth occurring in rental condominiums. These units are typically more expensive and smaller than other forms of housing, and may not meet the needs of many renter households, including families with children and those with lower incomes.

York Region's *I Count* findings indicated an increase in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness, meaning that people are experiencing homelessness for longer periods of time. The Region and its community partners have made progress in implementing programs using a "Housing First" approach to provide intensive support and financial assistance to people experiencing chronic homelessness to help them find and keep housing. However, with a limited supply of rental housing, and in particular, affordable rental housing, many people who experience homelessness will continue to struggle to find and keep a safe and stable place to live. This puts growing pressure on the Region's emergency housing and seasonal shelters, and may be a factor driving the increase in chronic homelessness.

The housing policy environment is changing, creating potential for new opportunities and innovations

As detailed in a separate June 2019 Council report, in April 2019 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released [Ontario's Community Housing Renewal Strategy](#) (CHRS). The CHRS sets out a plan to protect and expand the supply of community housing, including policy changes and a commitment to participate in three funding initiatives under the National Housing Strategy. York Region is set to receive \$17.4 million in new federal and provincial funding between 2019 and 2022, which can be used for community housing development, capital repairs and supports for tenants. On May 2, 2019, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released [More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan](#), which identifies strategies to support development of affordable private market housing and a mix and range of housing types to meet different needs. These strategies are outlined in a [May 2019](#) memo and an update will be provided in June 2019. Staff are assessing the impacts and opportunities for the Region as a result of both provincial plans and will incorporate them into the updated *Housing Solutions* action plan.

The federal *Reaching Home* initiative, which replaced the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, was launched April 1, 2019. The United Way Greater Toronto is the Community Entity responsible for allocating federal homelessness funding in York Region, while the Region, as Service Manager, plans and administers homelessness prevention and housing stability programs that receive provincial or municipal tax levy funding. A number of new federal requirements under *Reaching Home* align with existing Regional strategies to address homelessness and provincial directions, including implementation of coordinated access to homelessness prevention and housing stability services. In addition, under *Reaching Home*, Community Entities will be expected to identify outcomes that they will achieve with their federal funding and set targets. While the Region has always collaborated with the Community Entity, this relationship will be increasingly important.

Community consultation participants said that the *Housing Solutions 2019-2023* update should focus on the housing supply, preventing and reducing homelessness, and addressing residents' needs for support

The findings of the community consultations and housing market data suggest three areas of focus for an updated Phase 2 action plan for *Housing Solutions*:

1. Deliver and promote an affordable and diverse housing supply
2. Prevent and reduce homelessness
3. Provide supports that help people keep their homes

The updated Phase 2 action plan will be presented to Council in fall 2019.

Implementation of the *Housing Solutions* action plan supports the strategic goal of “appropriate housing for all ages and stages” of the Region’s [Vision 2051](#) and the Corporate Strategic Plan priority of “support community health and well-being”

The actions and strategies set out in *Housing Solutions* support the ongoing creation of affordable housing options that meet the different and changing needs of York Region residents. The *Housing Solutions* action plan directly contributes to the 2019 to 2023 Corporate Strategic Plan priority to “support community health and well-being”, supporting the objectives of delivering and promoting affordable housing and improving access to health and support services.

5. Financial

The majority of the goals and actions in the Region’s Housing and Homelessness Plan are managed within the approved annual budget. Funding for new initiatives has been anticipated in future multi-year budget outlook projections. The Region’s funding allocation of \$68.6 million over three years from the Community Housing Renewal Strategy will significantly help in furthering new initiatives in the Housing and Homelessness Plan. Any actions requiring further Regional investment will be presented to Council for approval as part of the annual budget review process.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are important partners in implementing the Housing and Homelessness Plan, particularly in regard to increasing the rental housing supply and implementing official plan policies that support and encourage the development of affordable housing options. Local municipalities were engaged during the five-year review and update of *Housing Solutions* and will continue to play a role in implementation of these actions.

7. Conclusion

Over the past five years, York Region has made significant progress towards the goals and actions set out in the 2014 *Housing Solutions* housing and homelessness Plan. The majority of the original action plan is now complete, and staff are currently developing an updated goal and action framework as part of the required five-year review of the Plan. Community consultations were conducted in late 2018 and early 2019 to support the review.

York Region housing market data and homelessness enumeration findings show that despite successes in increasing the supply of subsidized and private, purpose-built rental housing as well as significant capacity building within the homelessness and housing stability service system, there are still challenges. These include rising costs and a limited supply of rental housing options, as well as limited diversity in affordable ownership housing and an ongoing need for a range of supports to help people afford and stay in their housing.

The updated *Housing Solutions* action plan for Phase 2 will provide a road map for York Region and its partners to continue to work to help residents find and keep affordable and appropriate housing.

For more information on this report, please contact Rick Farrell, General Manager, Housing Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72091. 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

May 28, 2019
Attachment (1)
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