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REGION OF PEEL
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TO: The Regional Chair and members of Regional Council

RE: Maintaining Healthcare Services for the Homeless in Peel

DATE: March 24, 2022

REFERRAL TO _____
RECOMMENDED _____
DIRECTION REQUIRED _____
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED _____

The Peel Alliance to End Homelessness (PAEH) is providing this letter of support for the Regional Municipality of Peel’s Housing Services to develop a permanent, integrated healthcare model for Peel’s homelessness population, in collaboration with health services and other related organizations in Peel.

PAEH is a community collaborative of agencies from across the Region of Peel working together to end homelessness in our communities. Our aim is to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and non-reoccurring.

People who experience homelessness have an average life expectancy of approx. 50 years of age, almost 20 years lower than a housed population. (<https://nationalhomeless.org/>). The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that people experiencing homelessness are at a greater risk of infectious and chronic illness, poor mental health, and substance abuse. One of the key social determinants of health is safe housing.

At the start of the pandemic, there was no dedicated health team for people experiencing homelessness in Peel. The pandemic further shed light on the health inequities that existed within our communities. Prior to the pandemic, individuals experiencing homelessness relied largely on hospital emergency rooms for care, but these environments are not suited to the specific needs of this population.

As Covid rose and the province went into lockdown, several temporary measures were put in place to protect and care for the homeless. One such measure, an isolation site, provided an opportunity to deliver healthcare services to the homeless in innovative ways, allowing for improved integration of health, housing and other social supports.

Homeless Health is a community Partner of the PAEH. Throughout the pandemic, they have proven to be a much-needed service for people experiencing homelessness. Their treatment does not stop at Covid care, they are also providing; medication management, palliative care, mental health and addictions support, geriatric care, hospital preparation and step-down and primary care work up. Clinton Baretto and his team of very skilled and dedicated RNs have filled an enormous gap in the sector and in our system.

We commend the Region’s housing services department in obtaining and maintaining the services of Homeless Health Peel and support their request for funding to transition the services provided at the isolation centre to the site of the previous family shelter at 1767 Dundas St. East, Mississauga for a period up to 19 months. We also support their request to enter into service agreements for the 19-month period with the providers who currently operate the Covid 19 isolation site for the homeless. This will ensure a seamless transition of services.

Housing Services request to design a permanent integrated model of care for the homeless community is a welcome initiative. Access to primary care in a place that is easy to access can also help achieve better housing outcomes for the homeless population. Other research shows health inequities can be addressed by easing gaps in service and reducing costs to the system by diverting clients from emergency departments and health-related institutions (Key findings 8.1-7 Appendix 1: Improving Health Care services for the Homeless in Peel).

The Peel Alliance to End Homelessness requests that the Region's Housing Service department create an advisory committee to help with the development of a permanent integrated model of care, which includes representatives from Health Services, other health care organizations, people with lived experience, PAEH and its service-providing community partners.

We thank the Region for its support for the homelessness-serving sector and Housing Services for its commitment to healthcare for the homeless population. We look forward to our continued work and collaboration in addressing the needs of those experiencing homelessness in Peel.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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