
REPORT TITLE: Enhancing Supports for Street Homelessness

FROM: Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the Welcoming Streets Program be disbanded and replaced by a re-designed place-based Regional Outreach Program; and**
- 2. That the contract (Document 2019-275P) for Peel's Outreach Program, previously awarded to the Canadian Mental Health Association, be increased in the estimated amount of \$1,700,000 (excluding applicable taxes) for a revised total contract amount of \$4,341,088 for the current contract term expiring on March 31, 2024, to allow for the provision of an additional mobile team to provide outreach services for Peel's street homeless population, all in accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended; and**
- 3. That the contract (Document 2022-602N) between the Region of Peel and Logixx Security Inc., for additional security services for the Wilkinson Shelter and Peel Family Shelter, be extended in the estimated amount of \$168,571 (exclusive of applicable taxes), pursuant to Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended; and**
- 4. That approval be granted to further extend the current security service contracts for the Region of Peel shelters (Documents 2022-507N and 2022-602N), between the Region of Peel and Logixx Security Inc., as required to address the need for additional and/or enhanced shelter and mobile security services in 2023, subject to the receipt of suitable pricing and available budget, all pursuant to Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On June 10, 2021, Council approved staff's recommendation to create a 'Welcoming Streets' Pilot Program in downtown Brampton, funded by the Region of Peel and operated by the City of Brampton.
- The Welcoming Streets Pilot program launched in January 2022 and was evaluated in early 2023. The evaluation results were reported to Council on March 23, 2023.
- The evaluation revealed that the Welcoming Streets Pilot program had a positive impact in downtown Brampton, but duplicated the services already provided by the Region's Street Outreach program. As a result, staff recommend replacing the existing Welcoming Streets Pilot program with a re-designed placed-based Regional Outreach program, beginning in 2024, with the understanding that additional investments in outreach cannot come at the expense of significant and much needed investments in homelessness prevention and permanent housing solutions.
- Staff also recommend interim, temporary solutions to enhance supports in Mississauga and around the Wilkinson shelter in Brampton, while the new place-based program is designed.

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- There is no net budget impact as the additional costs proposed in the report are funded through external funding.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

Individuals in Peel who live rough on the streets rely on government and non-profit services to meet their basic needs. During the pandemic, many social supports for the homeless and other vulnerable residents were temporarily shut down, raising concerns amongst business owners in downtown Brampton about increased trespassing, loitering, vandalism, and drug-use on their properties.

In response, on November 26, 2020, Council directed staff to investigate the feasibility of a grant program to support businesses in downtown Brampton. On June 10, 2021, Council approved staff's recommendation to create a 'Welcoming Streets' Pilot Program in downtown Brampton, funded by the Region of Peel and operated by the City of Brampton.

The Welcoming Streets Pilot program launched in January 2022. Four staff, known as "Leaders", were hired on part-time contracts, reporting to the City of Brampton's Downtown Coordinator. The pilot program was evaluated in early 2023 and the results were reported to Council on March 23, 2023.

The evaluation revealed that the Welcoming Streets Pilot program had a positive impact in downtown Brampton, but duplicated the services already provided by the Region's Street Outreach program. Staff therefore recommended that the Welcoming Streets pilot program be disbanded and replaced with a re-designed place-based Regional Outreach program. Staff further recommended that Council defer approving the creation of a place-based Outreach Program until May 11, 2023, to allow Council to consider the recommendation as part of a more comprehensive housing investment discussion. Finally, and to prevent disruption in service in downtown Brampton, Council approved staff's recommendation to provide up to \$150,000 to the City of Brampton so the existing Welcoming Streets program could continue in downtown Brampton until the end of 2023.

During the March 23, 2023, discussion, concerns were raised by some Councillors about the need for immediate support to businesses in other homelessness hotspots in Peel, while the new place-based outreach program was designed. Discussions about interim solutions ensued, and Council approved a motion to defer a decision about interim solutions until May 11, 2023 Regional Council meeting.

This report reaffirms staff's recommendation to replace the existing Welcoming Streets Pilot program with a re-designed place-based Regional Outreach program. This report also proposes interim, temporary solutions to enhance supports in Mississauga and around the Wilkinson shelter in Brampton, while the new place-based program is designed. Finally, this report highlights the risk of investing in basic needs/emergency supports for the street homeless, without investing more in permanent housing solutions such as supply, subsidies and supports; solutions that are needed to end chronic homelessness in Peel.

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2. Re-designed Place-Based Regional Outreach Program

As per the March 23, 2023, report entitled “Evaluation of the Welcoming Streets Pilot Program” staff recommend that the services delivered through the downtown Brampton Welcoming Streets pilot be delivered on an ongoing basis, starting in 2024, through a redesigned Regional Outreach program that is place-based. More specifically, staff recommend:

- That the re-designed Regional Outreach Program continue to serve the entire region, with the addition of place-based teams in known homelessness hotspots including but not limited to downtown Brampton (which will extend to the Queen/Kennedy area), Malton, Cooksville and along the lakeshore in Mississauga.
- That the redesigned place-based outreach program includes formal mechanisms to collaborate with Peel Regional Police, existing local municipal staff who support businesses, community agencies that serve the homeless, and other stakeholders such as Business Improvement Associations (BIAs).
- That the re-designed outreach program maintains response times to businesses, achieved through the Welcoming Streets pilot.

The budget for the existing outreach program is \$2.47 million. Preliminary annual cost estimates for the enhanced place-based outreach program are up to \$6.12 million. Costs will be finalized as the program is designed and funding to operate the new program will be requested through the 2024 budget.

3. Proposed Interim Solutions

Given the immediate need for more supports in Cooksville, Port Credit and in the area surrounding the Wilkinson shelter in Brampton, staff recommend the following interim solutions while the new place-based program is designed.

a) Second Temporary Outreach Team for Mississauga

The existing Regional Outreach Program, contracted out to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) two mobile teams that provides 84 hours per week of mobile outreach support. At the present time, one outreach team focuses on Mississauga, while the other is focused on Brampton and Caledon.

As an interim solution while the new place-based program is designed, staff recommend adding a new outreach team to focus on the Cooksville and Port Credit areas of Mississauga. This team will enhance existing supports to the homeless, businesses and other stakeholders in Cooksville and Port Credit, while also allowing the existing two teams to focus on other areas in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon. In order to bring the new team on as quickly as possible, staff is seeking Council approval to increase our current contract with CMHA by \$1.7M from July 1, 2023, until March 31, 2024.

b) Increased Neighbourhood Security at Wilkinson Shelter

Currently, security services are provided at all regional shelters and in the neighbourhoods surrounding Cawthra and Wilkinson shelters. Given escalating concerns from businesses surrounding Wilkinson shelter, staff recommend implementing

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a mobile security approach at this shelter, similar to the approach in place at Cawthra. This will provide neighbouring businesses near Wilkinson mobile security services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until a permanent solution is designed.

To implement this enhanced service quickly, staff is seeking Council approval to extend the contract between the Region of Peel and Logixx Security Inc. in the estimated amount of \$168,571 (exclusive of applicable taxes), pursuant to Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Peel is facing an affordable housing crisis, with an estimated 91,000 households in core housing need. As revealed in the report on today's agenda entitled "Affordable Housing: Investments Needed to Close the Gap", the affordable housing system is currently meeting approximately 20 per cent of need and over \$2 billion is needed to simply continue to meet this level of need over the next 10 years.

Investing in programs such as Welcoming Streets and Outreach is important as they meet basic needs and provide crisis response and supports to the homeless living on the streets and other impacted stakeholders. However, these investments alone will not help our community end chronic homelessness. Additional and larger investments in prevention and permanent housing solutions such as supply, subsidies and supports are also required simultaneously to improve housing outcomes.

So, while staff recommend re-designing a placed-based outreach program, staff advise against doing so at the expense of much needed investments in homelessness prevention and permanent housing solutions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The additional \$1,700,000 required for the interim outreach services described in this report will be funded through increased external funding in the 2023 and 2024 Housing Support operating budget with no net financial impact to the Region.

The increased Neighborhood Security costs at the Wilkinson shelter will bring the total to \$787,500 per year, to be funded through increased external funding in the 2023 and 2024 Housing Support operating budget with no net financial impact to the Region

CONCLUSION

The Welcoming Streets Pilot program launched in downtown Brampton in January 2022. The pilot program was evaluated in early 2023, concluding that the program had a positive impact in downtown Brampton, but duplicated the services already provided by the Region's Street Outreach program

As a result of the evaluation, staff recommend replacing the existing Welcoming Streets Pilot program with a re-designed placed-based Regional Outreach program. Staff also recommend interim, temporary solutions to enhance supports in Mississauga and around the Wilkinson shelter in Brampton, while the new place-based program is designed.

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Over the coming months, staff will work with key stakeholders to re-design the Regional Outreach Program, for launch in 2024. The funding required to operate this program will be requested through the 2024 budget process.



Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

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