



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 21-279**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Lanie Hurdle, Chief Administrative Officer
Resource Staff: Ruth Noordegraaf, Director, Housing & Social Services
Date of Meeting: November 16th
Subject: Winter Initiatives Supporting the Homeless Community

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 2. Increase housing affordability

Goal: See above

Executive Summary:

City staff have been working with community partners to identify additional options for the homeless community as most shelters and services have been operating at or near capacity in the last few months. City staff also recognize that some individuals prefer not to access services in shelters or at the Integrated Care Hub (ICH). This report provides Council with various options for consideration that can be explored and implemented for the homeless community for the 2021-2022 winter season: 1) the establishment of a sleeping cabin pilot with Our Livable Solutions, and 2) the establishment of a warming and counseling centre. At this point, the sleeping cabin pilot initiative can only proceed if staff can finalize a partnership with Our Livable Solutions as it is the only community organization that has expressed an interest in operating such a pilot program. Should a partnership not be viable, City staff would inform Council and would not proceed with the sleeping cabin pilot initiative this winter.

It is also important to note that these initiatives would be for the winter months only. The sleeping cabins initiative would be assessed, and should the pilot be successful, some longer-term location options would be identified and provided to Council for consideration.

The two (2) initiatives for consideration in this report are in addition to overflow shelter space being provided, access to motels (with willing property owners) as well as the recommended

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extension of the ICH operations until April 1, 2022, as described in Report Number 21-287 submitted to Council for consideration on November 16th. City staff have also explored the option of renting homes with large number of bedrooms but private landlords have expressed concerns in renting for the vulnerable population due to potential damage to the residential units. Therefore, this is not an option provided in this report.

Should Council support one or both initiatives presented in this report, it would be recommended that staff be able to enter into agreements and contracts, based on approved budget and overall operations, considering the tight timeframe before the winter season. City staff are suggesting that the remaining funds from Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) Phase 3 and funds from the Homelessness Reserve could be utilized to finance these initiatives.

Recommendations:

That Council considers and provides direction on the following initiatives for additional support to the homeless population over the winter months:

1. Establish a partnership with Our Livable Solutions to create a sleeping cabin pilot initiative that will operate a maximum of ten (10) sleeping cabins from December 2021 until April 30, 2022 and that will be located at Portsmouth Olympic Harbour; and

That Council approve an additional investment of up to \$257,000 for two (2) sleeping cabins, capital implementation costs and operating costs of the sleeping cabin initiatives for a 5-month pilot from December 2021 to April 30, 2022 to be funded from the Social Services Relief Fund Phase 3; and

That Council establish (from December 2021 to April 30, 2022) the sleeping cabin pilot initiative Portsmouth Olympic Harbour under Ontario Regulation 141/20 (the "Regulation"), which permits the establishment of temporary residential facilities for the purpose of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and should the Regulation expire prior to the implementation of the sleeping cabin pilot initiative, that Council direct staff not to enforce the City's Site Plan Control By-Law Number 2010-217 and Zoning By-Law during the period from December 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022 in Portsmouth Olympic Harbour for the purpose of permitting the establishment of the sleeping cabin pilot initiative, as approved by Council pursuant to Report Number 21-279; and

That Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to enter into any agreements or contracts, within the approved budget, in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services for the sleeping cabin pilot initiative.

AND/OR

2. **That** Council support the establishment of a warming and counseling centre by committing up to \$300,000 for the warming and counseling centre which will operate from December 2021 until April 1, 2022 in partnership with community agencies and to be funded from the Homelessness Reserve; and

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That Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to enter into any agreements or contracts, within the approved budget, in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services for the warming and counseling centre operations as well as any related amendments thereto or other documents required to complete the work as directed by the Director of Housing and Social Services.

OR

3. That Council not support additional initiatives presented in Report 21-279 and direct staff to continue to work on overflow shelter space as well as maximize access to motel rooms for an extended period of 5 months using Social Services Relief Fund Phase 3.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services

Craig Desjardins, Acting Commissioner, Corporate Services

Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects

Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works

Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston

Not required

Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer

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Options/Discussion:**Introduction**

As outlined in previous reports to Council, the prevalence of homelessness in the community appears to be increasing as is the occurrence of mental health and addictions complexities. This challenge is not unique to Kingston as many communities across Ontario and Canada more broadly, are facing similar situations. Considering that most shelters and support services, such as the Integrated Care Hub (ICH), have been operating close to or at capacity for several months, staff have been working with community partners to identify additional temporary initiatives to expand homelessness system capacity during the coldest months of the year.

This report is in follow up to [Report Number 21-260](#) and provides Council with an update on two winter initiatives supporting the homelessness community which include a sleeping cabins pilot initiative and the establishment of a warming and counseling centre.

It is important to note that a recommendation to extend the operations of the ICH until April 1, 2022 has been provided in Report Number 21-287, submitted to Council for consideration on November 16th. Staff are also working on reviewing the current encampment protocol and will be providing considerations at an upcoming Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee meeting.

1. Sleeping Cabins Pilot Initiative

At its October 19th Council meeting, Council directed staff to invite community partners to propose a community-led sleeping cabin program and approved the investment of \$150,000 from the Vuorinen Estate to support the establishment of the project. Since this time staff have been coordinating with interested community members to further develop the concept.

Organizational Leadership

Based on staff's review of other sleeping cabin initiatives, successful programs are supported by a lead agency or a partnership of agencies to plan, administer, and operate the facility. This administrative oversight is responsible for ensuring safe and acceptable operations and conducts outreach to connect program participants to resources and support programs. The role of the lead agency is to ensure the project is safe for participants while mitigating off-site impacts and providing connections to necessary health and social services.

Our Livable Solutions (OLS) is a newly established community group is the only organization that has expressed an interest in leading the sleeping cabin pilot project in Kingston. City staff has met with the OLS board and is currently working on finalizing the operating model for the sleeping cabin pilot.

OLS recognize that the winter initiative is an opportunity to pilot a sleeping cabin program. If successful, sleeping cabins could be considered for longer-term utilization at a dedicated location. If direction is given to pursue a sleeping cabin pilot project, OLS will provide a

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development and operating plan to facilitate the construction of the project, determination of operating procedures, and provision of support services. It will be an expectation of the project that OLS is responsible for the establishment of a safe and functional facility that limits off-site impacts while ensuring program participants are supported with programming and services with a view towards achieving independence. It is important to note that the sleeping cabin pilot will not be implemented this winter if a partnership between the City and OLS is not viable.

Location Considerations

As identified in [Report Number 21-260](#), a sleeping cabin project would need to comply with the Ontario Building Code and meet fire and life safety requirements. Staff have been reviewing requirements to ensure that the sleeping cabins proposed by OLS comply.

An acceptable location for a sleeping cabin project will provide appropriate electrical services to power and heat the individual cabins. Access to washrooms and showers are necessary on-site and a small kitchen facility could offset the need for food services. These facilities could be provided in an existing building on-site or brought in through mobile or portable service.

City staff reached out to a wide variety of community partners to evaluate interest in accommodating a sleeping cabin project on properties where there are existing facilities. Staff only heard back from one potential community organization that identified an interest in partnering but discussions were not advanced enough to include as an option in this report.

City staff have therefore reviewed the feasibility of utilizing City properties with existing services. Staff have reviewed sites primarily in the urban area of the city and have prioritized sites where most amenities are available to reduce implementation costs. Staff have not included sites that currently have other significant active community uses such as arenas and have not included sites located in the Inner Harbour area due to the existing concentration of services to vulnerable populations. Based on consultation with OLS, Portsmouth Olympic Harbour was identified as the preferred option for the following reasons:

The site is relatively close to the downtown core and is not anticipated to have significant community use over the winter months. The property provides for washrooms, showers and access to a small kitchen on the ground floor. The site would require electrical connection, temporary fencing, minor ground floor kitchen renovations and kitchen equipment as well as security cameras.

OLS has indicated that it will do some neighbourhood outreach to ensure that there is communication and engagement with surrounding neighbours.

Capital Costs

As indicated in the location assessment above, it is anticipated that Portsmouth Olympic Harbour would require some investments, primarily for electrical connection and kitchen renovations to ensure that each cabin has access to electricity and some type of portable heating unit and for a space to store and cook food. It is also anticipated that additional costs for

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fencing and security camera would be required. It is important to note that due to the tight timeframe to establish sleeping cabins before winter months, the sleeping cabins will have to be purchased directly from the provider. It is anticipated that ten (10) cabins are available by the end of December. Based on the information obtained through discussions with OLS, the estimated cost of one (1) sleeping cabin is approximately \$16,000 excluding tax. The cost of eight (8) sleeping cabins would be covered with the \$150,000 approved by Council on October 19th. The additional two (2) sleeping cabins estimated at a cost of \$35,000 with taxes could be funded from the Social Services Relief Fund Phase 3.

The electrical connection and life safety is anticipated to cost up to \$30,000. Staff assumed another \$3,500 for temporary fencing, \$2,500 for portable heaters, up to \$10,000 for kitchen renovations and kitchen equipment, \$4,000 for washroom and shower accessibility as well as up to \$12,000 to secure the site. Therefore, staff have estimated up to \$97,000 in implementation and capital costs, including the two (2) additional sleeping cabins.

Operational Costs

Staff recognize that site would require additional operational support including, facility maintenance, solid waste management and utilities. It is important to note that facility maintenance include ongoing removal of needles from sanitary system. This has been the ongoing experience at Belle Park, Artillery Park and 661 Montreal Street.

In addition to the above, staff have assumed funding of up to \$115,000 for operations, support and supervision on site over the five (5) months. Staff have estimated up to \$160,000 for all operating costs.

Land Use Considerations

City staff understand that Portsmouth Olympic Harbour does not have the appropriate land use designation or zoning permissions to accommodate this type of residential use. Staff also recognize that this is a pilot that would operate for a period of five (5) months. Staff are proposing that Council establish (from December 2021 to April 30, 2022) the sleeping cabin pilot initiative (Portsmouth Olympic Harbour) under Ontario Regulation 141/20 (the "Regulation"), which permits the establishment of temporary residential facilities for the purpose of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Should Regulation 141/20 expire prior to the implementation of the sleeping cabin pilot initiative, staff are recommending that Council direct staff not to enforce the City's Site Plan Control By-Law Number 2010-217 and Zoning By-Law during the period from December 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022 for Portsmouth Olympic Harbour as approved by Council for the purpose of permitting the establishment of the sleeping cabin pilot initiative.

2. Warming Centre and Counselling Centre

As the colder, winter months are approaching, staff recognize the need for a low-barrier, drop-in warming centre to allow unhoused individuals to be protected from overnight sub-zero

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temperatures. The need for such a facility has been identified by organizations working with the most marginalized community members who experience complex mental health and substance use challenges. As a result of these complexities, some individuals are unable to access shelter programs due to personal choice or unsafe, anti-social behaviour. Many individuals who would like to access shelter space have been unable to do so due to the capacity issues within the shelter system. The shelters are still operating at approximately half capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions. The shelters do continue to work closely with their Public Health IPAC teams to ensure appropriate operating procedures. The current congregate living restrictions on space will likely be in place until the Spring of 2022.

The proposed warming and counselling centre is based on a facility that operated in the winter of 2019 and saw an average of 35 clients per night. The facility was staffed by Home Base Housing and Kingston Community Health Centres and operated from a leased space at 235 Wellington Street.

City staff are currently working on securing a downtown location for a warming centre which would operate between the hours of 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. seven days a week providing individuals a place to keep warm. In addition, opportunities for the inclusion of basic food access and health care services are being considered.

A budget of \$300,000 is estimated to operate the warming centre from December 2021 to March 31, 2022. These costs are based on the actual operating costs of the 2019 warming and counselling centre and consist of expenses for staffing, leasing, security, and food services.

Discussions regarding potential locations are ongoing and staff are awaiting confirmation on the use of a possible place of worship, or potentially privately owned facility, that may have the space and amenities required for the successful operation of the warming centre.

Staff will work with Public Health's Infection Prevention and Control to ensure all health and safety measures are in place.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

City of Kingston Official Plan

Cit of Kingston Zoning By-Law 8499

Notice Provisions:

None

Accessibility Considerations:

Cabin access will be assessed should there be tenants with accessibility needs.

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Financial Considerations:

There is currently \$609,000 remaining in the Social Services Relief Fund Phase 3. It is recommended that up to \$257,000 from SSRF Phase 3 be utilized to cover the costs of the sleeping cabin pilot initiative. Report Number 21-287, presented on November 16th, also recommends the use of \$250,000 to extend the Integrated Care Hub operations until April 1, 2022. This would leave a balance of \$102,000 in the SSRF Phase 3 which needs to be committed before the end of December 31, 2021. The Homelessness Reserve has \$685,000 remaining. It is recommended this Reserve be utilized to fund the warming and counselling centre, leaving a balance of \$385,000.

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Lana Foulds, Director, Financial Services

Speros Kanellos, Director, Facilities Management & Construction Services

Shawn Armstrong, Fire Chief

Lacricia Turner, Director, Recreation & Leisure Services

Jenna Morley, City Solicitor

Exhibits Attached:

None