



**United Way**  
Peterborough & District  
uwpeterborough.ca

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – July 20, 2022

## United Way Peterborough & District Expresses Concerns Over Coming Winter

**PETERBOROUGH, ON (July 20, 2022)** – Today **United Way of Peterborough and District** released its summary of their Emergency Winter Response to Homelessness Initiative (see attached). This summary report coincides with concerns in the community surrounding the potential closure of the Overflow Shelter. UWP is using the summary report as an opportunity to highlight the investment that it took to ensure that no one died last winter, as well as express their deep concern that the upcoming decision to potentially close the Overflow Shelter will put people's lives at risk.

"On one of the hottest days this summer it may seem ironic that we are thinking ahead to the coming winter" stated **CEO Jim Russell**. "However, in light of the recent City Council decision to receive a report from Social Services without taking action, we are fearful that the funding for an Overflow Shelter will not be available to support individuals experiencing homelessness this winter."

Russell emphasizes that close to **a million dollars of one-time funding** was invested into initiatives outside of municipal services last winter to aid in an emergency response to homelessness. Some of the funding went to survival gear, culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people, warm drop-in space, and harm reduction. Funding was provided to the United Way through the **Government of Canada's Reaching Home program** and at that time consultations with community partners occurred to assess where best to invest that money. "The goal was to do everything possible to ensure people didn't die. There are a number of people that choose not to go to shelter or are banned for various reasons, so it was important to have a minimal safety net."

The soon to be released **Point-in-Time Count** found that of the individuals interviewed on the night of the count, December 9th, 2021, all adult shelter beds were at capacity and 82 people slept rough or didn't know where they would sleep that night.

"There is a great strain on the community when it comes to dealing with the homeless issue. Our fear is that closing the 32 bed Overflow Shelter will indeed exacerbate and increase the chances of people dying alone in the cold," said Russell.

Russell goes on to express that shelters are not permanent solutions to homelessness, that housing is a human right, and ultimately "a community's measure can be seen in how it responds to the most vulnerable. **I can't think of a more vulnerable person than someone who is alone, homeless, with nowhere to go while it is minus 30 outside.**"

"We recognize the hard work of Social Services in responding to homelessness particularly through a time of COVID and our hope is that Council supports the recommendation to provide continued support to an overflow shelter this coming winter. To ignore that need would be unconscionable."



**United Way**  
Peterborough & District

For more information, please contact:  
Jim Russell, CEO, United Way Peterborough & District  
T: 705-742-8839 E: [jrussell@uwpeterborough.ca](mailto:jrussell@uwpeterborough.ca)



United Way  
Peterborough & District

REACHING  
HOME

CANADA'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY



Canada

## United Way Peterborough & District Summary Report: Emergency Winter Response to Homelessness Initiative

United Way Peterborough & District is pleased to announce the outcomes of its **Emergency Winter Response to Homelessness Initiative, funded by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home program**. As the Community Entity for the Reaching Home program, United Way Peterborough & District received an incremental increase in funding of **\$1.12 million** to be invested between **November 2021 and March 2022**. Through engagement with community members, advocates, agencies, and city officials, UWP heard that people experiencing homelessness during the winter is a critical threat to their safety and wellbeing. To **prevent people from dying** due to winter homelessness, this funding was invested in four key service areas: Outreach particularly outside of 9-5; Safe after-hours drop-in space for people not accessing the shelter system; Healthcare outreach and COVID testing for homeless individuals; and Adding more permanent housing options for people experiencing homelessness. Ten programs related to these four service areas were funded (see attached).

Collectively, these programs achieved the following outcomes:

- Agencies provided outreach to a total of 794 clients (individuals may have accessed services from more than one agency)
- Staff spent 1,018 hours doing mobile outreach
- 17 Indigenous people received culturally appropriate services, such as traditional medicines, access to knowledge keepers, and cultural activities
- 957 support services were provided, including crisis counselling sessions, referrals, transportation, and system navigation
- 1,301 personal items and outdoor necessities were distributed, including hygiene products, food, socks, mitts, sleeping bags, and clothing
- 4,389 wound care and basic needs kits were distributed
- 9,146 harm reduction supplies were distributed
- 92 individuals received wound care services
- 728 individuals received harm reduction services
- 21 people secured housing through funded services, including transitional and permanent housing
- 156 individuals and households were supported to remain housed through short term financial assistance, landlord-tenant advocacy, eviction prevention, and utility payments
- 10 individuals were able to remain housed after CMHA HKPR intervened in hostile unit takeover situations
- Brock Mission built, equipped, and opened their nurse practitioner-led clinic for people experiencing homelessness

No one experiencing homelessness between November 2021 and March 2022 was known by the City of Peterborough to have died due to weather related illnesses or injuries. During this time period, One City provided **after-hours drop-in that allowed 371 unique individuals to access a warm space** regardless of where they planned on staying that night. One City, among other agencies serving people experiencing homelessness, called shelters daily to check for available beds that they could refer their clients to. Often, shelters were at full capacity and unable to take in any more people. This is consistent with the findings of UWP's soon to be released Point-in-Time Count.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, UWP conducted its biannual **Point-In-Time Count**, which is an enumeration and survey of all people experiencing homelessness within the city. December 9<sup>th</sup>, like several other nights throughout the winter, saw **all adult shelters at 100% capacity**, including the Overflow Emergency Shelter. During the funding period of November 2021 to March 2022, the City's Overflow Shelter had an **average capacity of at least 97%** for 4 of the 5 winter months. Almost half of people experiencing homelessness in the City of Peterborough that participated in the survey did not have access to a warm, safe, indoor location to sleep on the night of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021. While 46% of the Point-In-Time respondents reported plans to stay in shelter the night of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 27% planned on sleeping outdoors and 20% did not know where they were going to sleep that night.

There will be a **stark difference in the safety and survivability of this upcoming winter** for people experiencing homelessness based on the availability of services. The Reaching Home funding that allowed UWP to support 10 programs in achieving the mentioned outcomes was a one-time-only opportunity, leaving gaps in much needed services this coming winter. In addition, **City Council** is in the midst of deciding whether to continue operating the Overflow Shelter beyond October 2022, meaning that the 32 beds that were completely occupied on most winter nights like December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, will not be available. Predictions based on the findings of our forthcoming Point-in-Time Count indicate that the **closure of the Overflow Shelter could increase the number of people without indoor overnight accommodations by 60%** on any given night this winter.

UWP is concerned that the **systematic response to homelessness is fractured** going into this coming winter. There is a lack of resources available to support the 10 programs that served individuals and prevented winter homelessness-related deaths this past winter, and the implications of these service gaps will be exacerbated by the closure of the Overflow Shelter. The safety and wellbeing of the entire community, including people experiencing homelessness and neighbours of shelters such as the Overflow Shelter on Wolfe Street, is at risk of further deterioration due to a **lack of resources** for housing, sheltering, and supporting people experiencing homelessness. UWP is committed to supporting the community by working with community members, advocates, researchers, city officials, and people with lived experience to brainstorm solutions that ensure the safety of shelter users and shelter neighbours. These solutions will not be possible without **financial support and compassionate decision making** from all levels of government and community members.

# Emergency Winter Response to Homelessness Initiative



United Way  
Peterborough & District  
uw-peterborough.ca



## **THE URBAN CLINIC- BROCK STREET MISSION** \$79,258

Funding allocated to Brock Street Mission will help to establish a drop-in, volunteer Nurse Practitioner-led clinic, providing primary health care services and rapid COVID testing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## **PEER SUPPORT HOUSING OUTREACH PROGRAM- EFY** \$99,988

Funding to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough will hire 2 individuals with lived experience of homelessness as Peer Support Housing Outreach workers part-time for the next 5 months. This program supports individuals being released from the hospital or correctional institutions who are experiencing housing instability and/or homelessness.

## **CARE AT THE CORE - PARN** \$58,683

Peterborough Aids Resource Network funding will provide emergency financial assistance to clients experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness and link homeless Cis and Trans women who use substances with community-based health resources. Funding will also enhance the HIV and Hepatitis C prevention and support work conducted through the Harm Reduction Works program.

## **OVERNIGHT WINTER DROP IN- ONE CITY** \$86,613

An after hours, low-barrier, warm space will be provided One City Peterborough through the funding that clients will be able to access after hours, between midnight and 6:00 am. Trained staff will also be available.

## **TRANSITIONAL HOME ONE CITY** \$167,879

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH RESPONSE INITIATIVE- ONE CITY** \$122,708

This program focuses on those who are living outside, couchsurfing or with service restrictions from shelters and supportive housing providers. One City Peterborough provides outreach services to assist individuals in acquiring survival gear, navigating services available to them such as coordinated access, housing wait-lists and medical and mental health resources and appeals processes with organizations with which they have service restrictions.

## **A NEW BEGINNING - JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF PETERBOROUGH** \$156,492

Funding will be used to finalize the renovation and setup of new, local transitional housing that will welcome initial clients in January. Six of the first clients will be from the By-name-Priority-List. A Case Manager will assist with the transition from homelessness to housed and, work with clients to establish routines, focus on living skills and building community.

## **REACHING HOME HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM - NOGOJIWANONG FRIENDSHIP CENTRE** \$49,258

Over the past year the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre has successfully managed a housing and homelessness program, however the project is only funded until December 31, 2021. Through this funding they will be able to continue to operate the program until March 31, 2022, providing housing services, prevention and shelter diversion services and client support services.

## **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING START UP CMHA HKPR** \$41,130

Canadian Mental Health HKPR funding will be used for start-up expenses related to the opening and operating of their new transitional housing facility.

## **HOSTILE UNIT TAKEOVER- CMHA HKPR** \$50,000

Funding will be used by Canadian Mental Health Association HKPR to provide individuals who are victims of Housing Unit Takeovers, with motel accommodations, food vouchers, and funds for transportation. Funds will also assist in the eviction of squatters from these individuals units, provide a deep clean and complete any repairs to the unit required.

## **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FLEX FUNDS - CCRC** \$61,855

The Homelessness Prevention Flex Fund will respond to housing-related needs that cannot be addressed by other funds, but that prevent loss of housing and promote housing stability.

**“ THIS IS CLEARLY A  
STOP GAP, FOR THE NEXT  
4 MONTHS. WE WANT TO  
MAKE SURE AS MUCH AS  
IS POSSIBLE THAT PEOPLE  
DO NOT DIE ALONE IN THE  
COLD. WHAT IS  
CRITICALLY NEEDED IS  
PERMANENT SAFE,  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
FOR PEOPLE. ”**

**-JIM RUSSELL, CEO, UNITED WAY  
PETERBOROUGH & DISTRICT**

**Canada**

Funded by the Government of Canada