



To: **Committee of the Whole**

Agenda Section: Human Services
Division: Social and Community Services
Department: Community Services

Item Number: **CCW - 2022-268**

Meeting Date: October 11, 2022

Subject: Winter Warming Programs 2022-2023

Recommendation

That Item CCW 2022-268, dated October 11, 2022, regarding Winter Warming Programs 2022-2023, be received.

Executive Summary

As outlined in CCW 2022-139 (May 24, 2022), County of Simcoe Council approved the allocation of \$100,000 from pandemic-specific Social Services Relief Fund Phase 5 (SSRF5) funding to assist communities in Simcoe County respond to warming centre needs on a one-time basis during winter 2022-23.

Regular provincial Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding guidelines do not support funding for warming centre operations. The entry point into the system of homelessness prevention services is defined as emergency homeless shelter. If warming centre initiatives are supported annually, a 100% municipal contribution will be required. Staff will bring forward for Council consideration details related to funding for warming centre initiatives in the 2023-24 budget process.

To facilitate an equitable, transparent, and timely process to select and fund winter warming program operators for winter 2022-23, staff worked in partnership with the County procurement team to develop and release a Request for Proposal (RFP) 2022-082 for five warming centres in Simcoe County, included as Schedule 1 to this report. This Item outlines the results of the procurement process and provides Council with details as to

warming centre operations and related supports in Alliston, Barrie, Collingwood, Midland, and Orillia.

Background/Analysis/Options

Funding received by the County of Simcoe for homelessness prevention services and supports comprises federal, provincial, and municipal dollars with the objective of connecting homeless individuals and families with the system of services and supports to move from homelessness into housing. As defined by funding guidelines, the entry point into the system of services and supports for homeless individuals and families is temporary emergency shelter.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, warming centres originated from community-based collaborations and initiatives, operated and funded outside the system of homelessness prevention services and support administered by the County of Simcoe.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of numerous widespread lockdowns and health-related capacity limits in congregate settings limited the number of warming options. Federal and provincial pandemic-specific funding envelopes allowed the County of Simcoe to work with funded service providers to temporarily expand emergency shelter capacity during the pandemic by establishing a motel sheltering model and to build upon existing homelessness services and supports through enhanced street outreach services, warming options and temporary respite beds for those seeking to come in from the cold. Flexibility within these pandemic-specific envelopes also allowed for time-limited funding for community-based warming centre initiatives.

In response to local need for warming centres during winter 2021-2022, consideration of reduced operating capacity in homeless shelter settings required by public health during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to address warming needs for unsheltered homeless individuals, Social Services Relief (SSRF) funding for warming centre operations was allocated to two lead agencies, one in the City of Barrie and one in the City of Orillia. Warming services in Alliston and Midland were accommodated through homeless shelter locations and in Collingwood, through the Out of the Cold program.

On May 24, 2022, County of Simcoe Council approved the allocation of \$100,000 from SSRF – Phase 5, a pandemic-specific funding envelope, to assist communities in Simcoe County to support warming centre needs on a one-time basis during winter 2022-23.

At the direction of Council, staff engaged with community partners and stakeholders, including municipalities comprising Simcoe County, and collected information by way of a widely distributed survey on warming centre operations to inform planning for winter 2022-2023. Committee report CCW 2022-140 (June 28, 2022) summarized the results of this survey. Survey results were used to inform the Request for Proposal (RFP) 2022-082 for Five warming centres in Simcoe County. Aligned with the information from survey respondents contained within the Warming Centre Survey Summary Report, the RFP emphasized the need for leadership involvement from within the homeless shelter services

sector, key stakeholder partnerships, demonstrated linkages to the broader system of homelessness prevention services and supports, engagement with the local municipality and, proponents' state of readiness to operate warming centres from mid-October 2022 to April 30, 2023.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was posted on the County's Bids and Tenders platform and distributed widely beyond this platform via a comprehensive email distribution list comprising social service organizations in Simcoe County. The RFP opportunity was further communicated to agencies providing services to homeless individuals and families through the Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness distribution network.

Warming centre operations were considered for each of the following geographic areas: Barrie, Orillia, South Simcoe (Alliston), North Simcoe (Midland) and South Georgian Bay (Collingwood). Funding allocations were to be determined in alignment with budget submissions from warming centre proponents and further informed by data collected from the Warming Centre Operations Survey, data from the 2022 Simcoe County Homeless Enumeration, data derived from the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and, in consideration of manually collected outreach data specific to unsheltered individuals.

Two proposals were received as of the submission deadline of August 11, 2022, one for warming centre operations in the City of Barrie and one for warming centre operations in the City of Orillia. A contract was awarded on September 6, 2022 to the Lighthouse Shelter as the lead agency for warming centre operations in the City of Orillia. This proposal, demonstrating a collaborative approach with key stakeholders including the contribution of space from a local church, also included a confirmed financial contribution from the City of Orillia. The operating model includes overnight warming that will be initiated when the temperature falls below -15 Celsius and as per public health vulnerable population advisories. This is the same operational model that was in place during winter 2021-2022.

The County procurement team finalized an agreement with a proponent for warming centre operations for winter 2022-2023 in the City of Barrie and, as of the date of writing this report, the award letter has been issued. Costs associated with warming centre operations in the City of Barrie will be further supported through a financial contribution from the City of Barrie, as approved at the June 27, 2022 meeting of Barrie City Council. The operating model offers overnight warming that will be initiated when the temperature falls below -15 Celsius and as per public health vulnerable population advisories. Daytime drop-in services are available through the regularly funded system of homelessness prevention services and supports in both the City of Barrie and the City of Orillia.

Although there were no submissions received for warming centre operations in Alliston (South Simcoe), Collingwood (South Georgian Bay) or Midland (North Simcoe), shelter operators in these communities addressed warming needs within their regular operations during winter 2021-2022. County staff is actively engaged with funded shelter operators in each community to confirm the need for any additional funding to facilitate warming operations for winter 2022-2023. As outlined in CCW-2022-124 (April 26, 2022), Council

approved an additional one-time allocation of \$60,000 each to Supporting Hope for Individuals and Families Today (S.H.I.F.T.) in Alliston and the Busby Centre South Georgian Bay in Collingwood, both areas where there is no permanent homeless shelter, to address the needs of homeless individuals and families during the winter months.

Financial and Resource Implications

Funding for warming centre operations for winter 2022-23 can be accommodated within the Social Services Relief Fund - Phase 5 (SSRF5) funding envelope.

Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan

Strengthen Social, Health and Educational Opportunities: Establish partnerships to identify opportunities for strengthened Human Services and Education to support improved health and wellbeing of our residents.

Growth Related Service Delivery: Create and strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders to support communities through the delivery of sustainable services.

Reference Documents

- CCW-2022-124 (April 26, 2022) Reaching Home Incremental Funding 2022-2023 and Homelessness Prevention Program Funding 2022-2023
- CCW 2022-139 (May 24, 2022) Social Services Relief Fund – Phase 5
- CCW- 2022-140 (June 28, 2022) Warming Centres

Attachments

Schedule 1 - Request for Proposal 2022-082 – Five Warming Centres in Simcoe County

Prepared By Lora D'Ambrosio, Manager, Community Services

Approvals

Wendy Hembruff, Director, Community Programs

Greg Bishop, General Manager, Social and Community Services

Trevor Wilcox, General Manager, Corporate Performance

Mark Aitken, Chief Administrative Officer

Date

September 21, 2022

September 22, 2022

October 2, 2022