



To: **Committee of the Whole**

Agenda Section: Human Services
Division: Social and Community Services
Department: Community Partnerships, Policy and Business Intelligence

Item Number: **CCW - 2025-004**

Meeting Date: January 14, 2025

Subject: **Provincial Application for Encampment Funding**

Recommendation

That Item CCW 2025-004, dated January 14, 2025, regarding the County of Simcoe's Encampment Response and Shelter Expansion Initiative, be received; and

That the funding proposal for submission to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing demonstrating alignment with provincial priorities for addressing homelessness and encampments, be endorsed.

Executive Summary

On December 13, 2024, the County of Simcoe was invited by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to submit a business case for the newly announced program - The Encampment Response Initiative, as part of the Homelessness Prevention Program funding. To be considered for this additional one-time funding the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing required a "written pledge from the local Service Manager to use the funds towards ending encampments" in our region. Additionally, the Ministry's letter (see Schedule 1) also included notice of "top-up" funding to the County's 2024/2025 Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit in the amount of \$81,900 to support transition of approximately 15 individuals from shelter programs into longer-term housing in order to free up space "to address the immediate shelter needs of the individuals in encampments."

On January 3, 2025, the County of Simcoe, in its role as the local System Service Manager, submitted a written letter pledging to utilize the proposed funding offered to end encampments in our region (Schedule 2).

The Encampment Response and Shelter Expansion Initiative emphasizes immediate action to increase shelter capacity, provide alternative accommodations, and restore impacted public spaces. As the System Service Manager for homelessness services for the County of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia, the County submitted its proposal on January 3, 2025.

The County's proposal:

1. Allows for the expansion of 226 temporary shelter spaces using its four modular facilities, a donated Sprung structure, expansion of an existing shelter and leasing two temporary rooming houses for 90 days (January 1, 2025, through March 1, 2025).
2. Requested \$2,433,000 from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the operational costs for temporary shelter spaces (this amount includes the costs incurred by local by-law services and site restoration.)
3. Provides a safe and accessible way to transition individuals from encampments into safer, supported accommodations.
4. Funds the return and restoration of impacted public spaces across Barrie, Orillia, Midland and Collingwood municipalities.

The County ensured that its proposal met the provincial goal of winding down encampments while ensuring community safety and promoting long-term housing stability. Through its 10-Point Homelessness Prevention Plan, the County of Simcoe can clearly demonstrate its readiness as it has pre-emptively invested in modular facilities and increased space capacity to enable more individuals to find long-term housing solutions, thus allowing individuals in encampments to come inside and access the emergency shelter system and other supportive services.

Background/Analysis/Options

In response to the growing prevalence of encampments across Ontario, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (the Ministry) announced the Encampment Response Initiative as part of the Homelessness Prevention Program. This initiative emphasizes immediate action to increase shelter capacity, provide alternative accommodations, and restore impacted public spaces. The County of Simcoe has been invited to submit a business case for funding under this program, as outlined in the Ministry letter dated December 13, 2024.

The County's Encampment Response and Shelter Expansion Initiative addresses the immediate needs of individuals living in encampments by:

- **Increasing Shelter Capacity:** Adding 226 temporary shelter spaces across multiple municipalities using modular facilities, Sprung structures, and rooming houses.
- **Restoring Public Lands:** Conducting environmental remediation and waste removal at key encampment sites in Barrie, Orillia, Collingwood, and Midland.

- **Providing Wraparound Support:** Partnering with organizations to ensure access to mental health, housing navigation, and other critical services.

The Ministry issued a call for proposals with clear directives to focus on urgent interventions aligned with provincial priorities of homelessness prevention and public safety restoration. Proposals are required to demonstrate readiness, collaborative frameworks, and the ability to implement solutions rapidly. The Encampment Response Initiative is a one-time 90-day funding opportunity that ends March 31, 2025.

The Encampment Response Initiative supports municipalities demonstrating readiness and commitment to address homelessness through temporary solutions and long-term strategies. The County's 10-Point Homelessness Prevention Plan ensures its readiness for immediate impact and sustainability and closely aligns with the outcomes set out by the Encampment Response Initiative.

This proposal exemplifies the County's commitment to innovative, inclusive, and community-focused responses to homelessness. With Council endorsement, the County of Simcoe is poised to deliver transformative impacts for individuals living in encampments and those impacted by encampments.

After the 90-day period ending on March 31, 2025, the County will integrate these temporary shelter spaces through its 10-Point Homelessness Prevent Plan (specifically, its rapid rehousing programs). Ongoing operations will be funded through existing resources such as its Homeless Prevention Plan funding, the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) and/or the County's municipal rent supplement program and its Reaching Home Funding. Additionally, any rent revenue from repurposed facilities will also contribute to reducing the ongoing operational costs. This financial approach ensures that the initiative is fully aligned with provincial objectives while maintaining fiscal responsibility for the County.

Financial and Resource Implications

The Encampment Response and Shelter Expansion Initiative does not require any additional budget allocation from County Council. The financial plan leverages substantial pre-existing investments and secured funding, with the only request for new funding directed to the Ministry under the Encampment Response Initiative.

The \$2,433,000 being requested is dedicated to covering operational costs for temporary shelter spaces until March 31, 2025, encampment site restoration activities, soft costs, including legal fees, insurance, and related administrative expenses.

Post-March 2025, the County will integrate these temporary shelter spaces into its 10-Point Homelessness Prevent Plan and rapid rehousing programs. Ongoing operations will be funded through existing resources such as the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, and municipal rent supplements and federal Reaching Home funding. Rent revenue from repurposed facilities will also contribute to financial sustainability. This financial approach

ensures that the initiative is fully aligned with provincial objectives while maintaining fiscal responsibility for the County.

Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan

- Healthy Communities: "Promote and support initiatives that improve the physical, social, and economic well-being of residents." This initiative directly addresses the needs of vulnerable populations by providing safe, supported housing options and restoring impacted public spaces.
- Environmental Sustainability: "Ensure public lands and assets are managed responsibly, with consideration for long-term community needs." The initiative includes comprehensive encampment site restoration and environmental remediation measures.
- Collaboration and Partnerships: "Enhance relationships with community organizations, municipalities, and other levels of government to deliver effective programs and services." This project is a collaborative effort involving municipalities, grassroots organizations, and provincial funding partners.

Reference Documents

There are no reference documents associated with this Item.

Attachments

Schedule 1 – MMAH Minister Letter December 13, 2024

Schedule 2 – Letter from Warden Clark to MMAH

Prepared By

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Approvals

Date

Mina Fayez-Bahgat, General Manager, Social and
Community Services

January 3, 2025

Trevor Wilcox, General Manager, Corporate Performance

January 8, 2025

Mark Aitken, Chief Administrative Officer

January 8, 2025