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The Regional Municipality of Durham

Minutes

Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness (DACH)

Thursday January 30, 2025

A regular meeting of the Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness was held on Thursday January 30, 2025, via Microsoft Teams at 2:00 PM

Attendance:

- Alex Cheng, Blue Door
- Alison Baxter, Community Development Council Durham (CDCD)
- Amanda Freer, Blue Door
- Atiya Siddique, Muslim Welfare Home
- Candice Correa, Durham Youth Services
- Christina Barrow, John Howard Society
- Christine Robinson, Community Living Durham North
- Clarence Keesman, The Refuge
- Dan Laffin, Back Door Mission
- Edna Ucanda, Community Development Council Durham (CDCD)
- Elizabeth Smart, YWCA
- Ginger Teoh, Durham Housing
- Heather Desta, Brain Injury Association of Durham Region
- Hermia Corbette, Community Development Council Durham (CDCD)
- Ian Griffiths, VHA Home HealthCare
- Jennifer Mackay, North House
- Jeramy Tibbles, Durham Children Aid Society
- Jill Dallaire, BGC Durham
- John Henry, Regional Chair
- Julie Chartier, BGC Durham
- Leah Wall, Durham Youth Services
- Margaret Eskins, DARS
- Marla Walters, Christian Faith Outreach Centre
- Maurice Brenner, Councillor, City of Pickering
- Melissa Jack-Morrison, Cornerstone
- Mona Emond, North House
- Rochelle Saunders, Salvation Army
- Rodney Hiscock, Salvation Army
- Tracey Hardinge, CMHA
- Tracy Greig, Durham Housing

- Tracey McGarry, The Participation House Project Durham Region

Staff Present:

- Amanda Bongard
- Ashley Smith
- Brandy Henderson
- Charmalee Harrison
- Erin Valant
- Heather Thompson
- Janet Harrison – Recorder
- Jennifer Bishop
- Jocelyn Siciliano
- John Kimmerly
- Lisa McIntosh
- Lisa Pitcher
- Megan Hueser-Shields
- Melanie Dissanayake
- Mtaness Shaloufe
- Rachel Hirstwood-Judd
- Sahar Foroutani
- Stephanie Ross
- Susan Lawrence

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

2. Increasing Voting Access for Homeless Electors – Heather Thompson

- Slide deck attached.
- Reduce barriers to electoral participation and ensure Canadians can exercise their democratic rights to vote.
- Conduct public information campaigns.
- Considerations for Next Steps
 - Needs Assessment.
 - Increase voter education.
 - Access to polling stations – mobile polling stations?
 - Enhance Services – social services mobile ID hubs.
- Prepare individuals for elections, including plain-language summaries on election processes and community engagement through the Social Planning Network of Ontario.
 - Q – Concerns about barriers such as transportation and ID requirements. Can Service addresses (e.g. shelters) be used for voting?
A – Yes, it a letter has been provided in the past.
 - Q – Is there a templated checklist to assist individuals (e.g., Do you have ID? Do you have an address?).
A – Yes, it will be forwarded to Sahar for system wide sharing.

3. Housing Services

- Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC)
 - Slide deck attached.
 - Housing Program Coordinators assist tenants with paperwork, system navigation, and referrals.
 - Collaboration with community agencies to create opportunities for residents.
 - Provide in person clinics at most buildings.
 - Pick up/drop off services for paperwork available.
 - Q – How would tenants connect with their Housing Program Coordinator?
 - A – Existing tenants can reach out to their property management.
- Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corporation (DRNPHC)
 - Slide deck attached.
 - 1200 units across Durham Region, Pickering to Newcastle to Beaverton
 - 50% of units are rent geared to income, 50% are market rent.
 - 18 sites, 2 property managers,
 - Sites include townhomes, low rise apartment buildings for families, single and seniors.
 - The Specialist Team will assist with mental health and addictions education, outreach, housing and building community partnerships.
 - Results include a reduced number of emergency calls, reduction in RGI terminations lower acuity of complaints/conflicts and tenants participating in positive activities and events.
 - Q – How do tenants connect for additional assistance?
 - A – Request to speak with a specialist or connect with Ginger Teoh, community boards for additional services.
 - Q – Is there transitional housing available for seniors with disabilities (blind, accessibility issues, unable to look after basic needs) when PSW resource are not adequate?
 - A – Long-term care or supportive living but unfortunately the wait times are long and there is no capacity in the system to meet those needs.

4. Homelessness System Update

- Durham Region – Veterans Homelessness
 - New program funding available to assist Veterans with housing supports.
 - Veterans identified through the By-Name list.
 - Support includes housing assistance, partnership with Veterans Affairs and wrap around services.
 - For further information contact: Susan Lawrence (Transitional Support Case Coordinator) Susan.Lawrence@durham.ca Cell: 289-404-5495
- Point In Time Count (PiT) Results (Confidential)
 - Slide deck attached.
 - Coordinated data collection strategy that counts the number of people experiencing homelessness in a region within a 24- hour period, conducted on November 18, 2024.

- The PiT Count consisted of two main components: the enumeration (identifying individuals experiencing homelessness) and survey collection.
- Surveys were collected from individuals experiencing homelessness. The survey period was open until November 22nd, providing additional data on their experiences and characteristics.
- PiT Count Results:
 - At least 1345 individuals experienced homelessness on November 18 to November 19, 2024, in Durham Region.
 - Of the 1345 individuals identified, 540 consented to participate in the survey portion of the count.
 - Surpassed By-Name-List of 811 individuals identified November 2024
 - There is a significant increase (134%) in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness across Durham Region in 2024, as compared to 2021.
- Highest number of survey responses from Oshawa, Whitby and Ajax, with Oshawa seeing the largest rise. Higher count could be due to increase of individuals living in these areas as well as the availability of homeless and social service to support individuals needs.
- When comparing to 2021 data, a significant growth of homelessness was observed across most regions in Durham Region, including, Whitby, Pickering, Uxbridge and Oshawa.
- The final report will be provided to DACH and published on the regional website by April 2025.
- Q – How can we reflect the hidden homelessness component?
 - A – This is difficult because of couch surfing, staying in cars, do not wish to be identified. Numbers maybe higher than what is being reflected.
- Q – How many other communities did the count at the same time?
 - Nation wide, across Canada. Larger communities typically participate.
- Winter Warming 2024/2025
 - Up to date information is available on the Region of Durham Website: <https://www.durham.ca/en/living-here/shelters-warming-centres.aspx#Durham-Region-Winter-Warming>
 - Coverage across the region with over 200 available spaces, most at capacity
 - Expanded 24-hour service at the Ajax HUB, 7 days a week.
 - Cornerstone gym has 30 beds.
 - Providers are meeting weekly to discuss any challenges and establish guidelines.
 - Clarington is providing daytime programing.

5. Service Provider Updates

- Jennifer Bishop – Station Gallery Event Feb 12th Invite forwarded in chat

6. Next Meeting – Thursday April 24th, 2025, 2:00 pm – 4 pm