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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Social Services
Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report #2021-INFO-79
Date: July 16, 2021

Subject:

Durham Region Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (CSWP) – 2021 Community Engagement Update

Recommendation:

Receive for Information

Report:

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 In January of 2019, legislative amendments to the Police Services Act mandated that communities across the province develop a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (CSWP). Community safety and well-being describes a place where everyone feels safe, has a sense of belonging, where individuals and families can meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, as well as social and cultural expression.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of the recently completed, second round of CSWP community engagement. This engagement was conducted for the purposes of revalidating the priority risk factors identified in 2019/2020 prior to the tabling of the final report and implementation plan this Fall.

2. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 2.1 As outlined in reports 2019-COW-15; 2019-SS-17; 2021-INFO-16; 2021-COW-11 and durham.ca/cswp, Durham Region is committed to developing a CSWP that will offer the highest value for the community.

3. Community Engagement

- 3.1 In early 2021, LURA consulting was retained to assist with the second round of community engagement. This work focused on understanding if the impact of the pandemic resulted in the identification of new risk factors, or the revalidation of the factors previously identified. The engagement also resulted in the identification of potential action items to inform the implementation plan.

- 3.2 This work included the development, distribution, and analysis of a public survey and three virtual open house sessions:

- A public survey was available May 21 - June 18, 2021 and could be completed online or by telephone. The survey received 379 responses.
- Three virtual open house sessions were hosted in June 2021, each targeting a different population group: equity groups, or those working on equity issues, public, and service providers. The open houses had a total of 57 participants, representing over 35 organizations.

- 3.3 Overall themes derived from all forms of engagement included:

- Pre-pandemic priorities are still relevant
- Intersectionality of the priorities must be recognized
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) should be an integral part of developing and implementing the CSWP
- The voice of individuals with lived experience is needed

- 3.4 Overall feedback/observations regarding pre-pandemic priority risk factors included:

- Many felt mental health has worsened
- The housing and basic needs of vulnerable populations were significantly impacted
- Most participants said the pandemic increased their sense of social isolation
- Half of the survey respondents indicated the pandemic had not changed or moderately changed substance use

- Many respondents were not sure whether criminal involvement worsened since the pandemic
- Many survey respondents were unsure if victimization had changed since the pandemic

3.5 Overall feedback/observations regarding action items included:

- Need to raise awareness of priority risk factors
- Develop new, and improve existing community programs and services
- The benefits of community hubs
- The need for programs that connect people to the community
- The need to collect and collate data to inform the CSWP
- The CSWP should be inclusive and build on progress being made because of the pandemic
- Participants expressed support for both virtual and in-person services as they both meet the needs of diverse groups of people
- Application of a DEI lens to all future work

4. Revised CSWP Priority Risk Factors: Addition of Anti-Racism

4.1 A key legislative requirement of the CSWP is the identification of preliminary risk factors. Based on the analysis of data and feedback from stakeholders, the following priority risk factors were identified pre-pandemic:

- Mental Health
- Substance Use (e.g. cannabis, opioids, alcohol)
- Homelessness & Basic Needs (e.g. no stable housing, inability to meet basic needs)
- Criminal Involvement (e.g. gangs, use of guns, other illegal activities)
- Victimization (e.g. control and use of threats or violence to exploit another for financial gain, abuse or neglect from a family member or intimate partner)
- Social Isolation (e.g. living alone without support or too far away from services)

4.2 When asked in the online public survey if the priorities were still relevant, almost all respondents (approximately 97 percent) felt they were, only 4 percent did not.

- 4.3 When asked during the virtual open houses if the priorities were still relevant, almost all respondents (approximately 88 percent of 57 participants) felt they were, 12 percent did not. As such, no changes are proposed to those areas.
- 4.4 Addressing and raising awareness of the systemic racism in our communities remains a priority of the Region. Next steps for the CSWP include alignment when addressing racism, discrimination, prevention, identification, and removal of barriers. Staff will be recommending the addition of Anti-Racism as a priority area to the CSWP.
- 4.5 This work will link to the work taking place in the CAOs DEI office, ensuring the most effective use of resources, providing consistent messaging, and leveraging best practices across the Province.

5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 5.1 The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is aligned with the following objectives found in the Region of Durham 2020 -2024 Strategic Plan:
- a. Under Goal 2: Community Vitality Objective: To foster an exceptional quality of life with services that contribute to strong neighbourhoods, vibrant and diverse communities, and influence our safety and well-being:
 - 2.1 Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing;
 - 2.2 Enhance community safety and well-being;
 - 2.3 Influence the social determinants of health to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations;
 - 2.4 Support a high quality of life for all through human services delivery;
 - 2.5 Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging;

 - b. Under Goal 3: Economic Prosperity Objective: To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation, and partnership:
 - 3.1 Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business;

- c. Under Goal 4: Social Investment Objective: To ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need, so that no individual is left behind:
 - 4.1 Revitalize community housing and improve housing choice, affordability, and sustainability;
 - 4.2 Build awareness and community capacity to address poverty;
 - 4.3 Demonstrate leadership in poverty prevention;
 - 4.4 Expand access to existing life stabilization programs;

- d. Under Goal 5: Service Excellence Objective: To provide exceptional value to Durham taxpayers through responsive, effective, and fiscally sustainable service delivery:
 - 5.1 Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Barring any other unforeseen circumstances, staff intend to present the final CSWP and implementation plan to Council for approval and adoption by the end of the year.

- 6.2 The additional time requested for further community engagement has allowed the Region to move forward with confidence that the impacts of COVID-19 have been incorporated into the development of the CSWP. This plan is the result of collective efforts of the Steering Committee, Area Municipal Working Group, internal working group, data sub-committee, residents, stakeholders, and service providers, and is positioned to collectively meet the needs of Durham's residents in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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