

# DEMAND FOR HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION RISES

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The demand for measures that help keep vulnerable local residents off the streets is climbing.

According to the latest statistics put forth by Halton Region, 1,925 households were supported last year by the municipality's homelessness prevention services - an increase from 1,746 in 2017.

The local families were assisted via dollars from the region's Housing Stability Fund, which is used to prevent evictions and utility disconnections, secure permanent housing and furniture, and assist with moving and storage costs.

The influx can be attributed to the region's efforts to intervene earlier in the lives of Halton residents at risk of homelessness, supporting them to ensure they remain housed, explained commissioner of social and community services Alex Sarchuk.

"The emphasis has shifted from emergency shelter to those upstream interventions," he said during Wednesday's regional council meeting.

**THE ISSUE:**  
**NEARLY 2,000 FAMILIES WERE SUPPORTED LAST YEAR BY THE REGION'S STABILITY FUND**

**LOCAL IMPACT:**  
**ASSISTANCE HELPED TO PREVENT EVICTIONS AND UTILITY DISCONNECTIONS, AMONG OTHER THINGS**

Sarchuk noted this shift in attention is largely responsible for a decline in family shelter admissions, which has fallen 36 per cent since 2015.

He went on to present council with a snapshot of homelessness in Halton that reveals individuals and families continue to struggle to keep a roof over their heads in one of the Greater Toronto Area's most affluent regions.

An enumeration conducted last year revealed that 271 people were experiencing homelessness in Halton, up slightly from the last

count done in 2016 that identified 264 individuals.

Sarchuk said the increase is largely the result of a change in the way statistics are gathered, with the provincial and federal governments now mandating the inclusion of homeless individuals in hospitals, jails, motels and couch surfers.

Of the 271 people considered homeless locally, the majority were staying in transitional housing or shelters, while the remainder were said to be couch surfing or staying in a motel, the hospital or jail. Fourteen individuals were experiencing unsheltered homelessness - a decrease of five per cent since the 2016 count was completed.

"Homelessness is an extremely complex issue with a multitude of contributing factors that can include lack of affordable or assisted housing, physical and mental health challenges, substance use, family breakdown and economic hardships," Sarchuk told council.

He highlighted the fact that 46 of the homeless individuals say they previously received foster care as minors - data that he said suggests the need for increased

support for youth leaving the care of Children's Aid Societies.

Those who are considered chronically homeless, meaning individuals or families who've been in the shelter system for six consecutive months or have three separate instances of homelessness in a calendar year, are eligible for support through the Halton Housing First program.

The initiative helps these residents find and maintain permanent housing in the private market and includes intensive wraparound case management for up to two years.

Since 2015, 70 vulnerable individuals and families have been supported through this program and remained housed to this day.

Halton Hills Coun. Jane Fogal lauded the success of the Housing First model, but questioned where homeless youth in Halton Hills can go as there's no shelter in north Halton.

Sarchuk said resources that support youth have been made available in Halton Hills through the Bridging the Gap program, along with the aforementioned proactive measures to keep people housed.

But if emergency housing is needed, efforts are made to bring the youth to the shelter system in south Halton, he said.

"I think this is an issue that needs to be addressed," said Fogal. "It's not helpful to say the only option is to move you to Oakville."

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette requested a breakdown of the statistics for each of Halton's four communities - numbers that staff will have to investigate.

He applauded the region's efforts to quickly address emergency homelessness situations, such as when he was recently made aware of a homeless 67-year-old and 22-year-old in Georgetown at a time when temperatures dropped to -30 C.

"I contacted staff and by the afternoon they had those two looked after," he said. "I want to thank you publicly for that quick action."

The region has been allocated \$6.5 million from the province's homelessness prevention coffers for the period running from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. During its Wednesday session, regional council approved a spending plan for the funds, which will see \$2.3 million

allotted to emergency shelter solutions, \$1.8 million for housing with related supports, \$1.3 million for homelessness prevention, \$650,000 for administration and the remainder for other services and supports.

Halton will also benefit from \$651,936 in federal Reaching Home funding. This amount is paired with \$400,000 from the region and divvied up between eight community projects, including homelessness prevention services in Halton Hills through Links2Care and transitional housing programs that support target groups like Shifra Homes, Home Suite Hope and the Halton Children's Aid Society.

## A 2018 ENUMERATION

conducted by the region revealed that 271 individuals were experiencing homelessness in Halton. Of those:

- 102 were staying in transitional housing
- 72 were staying in a shelter
- 44 were couch surfing
- 18 were staying in a motel
- 15 were in hospital/jail
- 14 were unsheltered

## STORY BEHIND THE STORY

With a shift in support focus, family shelter admissions have dropped 36 per cent since 2015.

## COMMUNITY

# HERITAGE ACTON RECEIVES LAUNCH PAD GRANT FOR 175TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

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Heritage Acton has received a Launch Pad coaching grant from the National Trust for Canada.

The National Trust of Canada's Launch Pad coach-

ing grants give community organizations direct coaching time with seasoned fundraising professionals and work with them to unlock the potential of their historic sites.

As Heritage Acton prepares to celebrate the town's

175th anniversary, its 2019 fundraising campaign will help Heritage Acton meet the needs of its strategic asset management plan and also fund additional interior upgrades to enhance accessibility of the Acton Town Hall.

"Heritage preservation is

an integral component of our community's charm and identity," said Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette. "My congratulations and thanks to the volunteers of Heritage Acton - both for the contributions they have made in the past and for those they will make in the future to foster and maintain local buildings of merit."

Heritage Acton is a non-profit charitable organization that was formed in 1983

to promote, facilitate and manage the restoration of buildings of historical and/or architectural significance in the town of Acton.

Its first major project was the restoration of the historic Acton Town Hall, built in 1883. The Citizens Hall was added in 2013 and included an elevator to provide access for the disabled to the historic Willow Room on the second floor.

The Acton Town Hall

Centre has become a cultural and community hub for the Town of Acton and provides facilities for local service clubs, municipal services, youth groups, as well as conference facilities for businesses.

For more information on the Town of Acton's 175th anniversary, visit [www.actontownhallcentre.ca](http://www.actontownhallcentre.ca) or visit on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ActonTownHallCentre](http://www.facebook.com/ActonTownHallCentre).



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