

Addressing Hard-to-House Homeless Population

Recommendation:

1. That Administration provide a report to the March 13, 2017, Community and Public Services Committee meeting on the work being done in collaboration with community partners and the Province of Alberta, and in conjunction with work underway through End Poverty Edmonton, to update *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10 -Year Plan to End Homelessness*.
2. That the Mayor write to the relevant provincial ministers indicating the City's interest in working collaboratively to focus our respective work to update our plans to end homelessness; and invite the City of Calgary to sign onto the letter and participate in plan renewal discussions.

Report Summary

As the City nears the end of the 10-year period for Edmonton's plan to end homelessness, in order to enable all partners to recommit their efforts to end homelessness in Edmonton, this report summarizes trends related to homelessness and emphasizes the need for additional permanent supportive housing projects in the city.

Report

Over the past eight years, much progress — employing the Housing First principle — has been made on achieving the goals and targets established in *A Place to Call Home*. In October 2016, 1,752 people were counted as experiencing homelessness in Edmonton during the Edmonton Homeless Count — a 43% decrease from the 2008 count. However, 70% of the individuals counted in 2016 were chronically homeless and nearly half self-identified as Indigenous.

Much work remains to close the gap as we reach the end of the 10-year period, particularly with the chronic homeless, also referred to as the hard-to-house population. A solution that is more all-encompassing than Housing First is required to accommodate the needs of hard-to-house Edmontonians. In order to reach the finish line, preliminary evidence suggests that the remaining homeless requires a more aggressive and focused service delivery model: permanent supportive housing, which is housing equipped with on-site wrap-around services and has been a proven and

successful approach.

Edmonton has a significant shortage of permanent supportive housing units. Wait lists for various affordable housing programs, especially permanent supportive housing, are well into the thousands. For example, only 213 of the original target of 1,000 units of permanent supportive housing have been developed since 2009. Today, the need for such housing in Edmonton continues to grow, now estimated at 1,000 units that require an annual investment of \$21 million over 10 years. **Clearly, in order to *End Homelessness in Edmonton* and achieve the aims of the 2007 report, we need to redouble our efforts for the benefit of hard-to-house homeless Edmontonians.**

Presently, both the federal and provincial governments are each in the process of preparing an Affordable Housing Strategy. The Province and the City both have plans to end homelessness that are nearing the end of their 10-year time frames. In fact, the City, in collaboration with the Province of Alberta and community partners, are sponsoring a community-led process to update *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*. This will incorporate work underway through End Poverty Edmonton. This update should:

- Verify the status of the targets set out in the 2009 report;
- Identify targets that have not been met and provide analysis as to why not;
- Outline the profile and needs of individuals who remain homeless in Edmonton;
- Outline the approach and types of housing required to accommodate the needs of the chronic homeless in particular;
- Assess the cost-effectiveness of permanent supportive housing and resultant reduced health care, justice, police and emergency service costs incurred by all orders of government;
- Identify successful permanent supportive housing models with associated cost estimates for consideration within an updated plan;
- Recommend updated timelines and strategies to eliminate homelessness in Edmonton.

Therefore, it would be valuable for administration to provide a report to Council, through Committee as soon as reasonably possible, to highlight the pressing need for focused investment in permanent supportive housing by all three orders of government.

Through the City Charter process, we have already proposed that one of the 'collaboration tables' could focus on affordable housing. As much work is already underway to establish such a collaboration table, there is an opportunity to include the City of Calgary in these discussions, given this is the intent of the collaboration table model, and because the need for focused and timely investment in permanent supportive housing is one that is shared by both of Alberta's big cities — hence the

recommendation for Calgary's participation.

Aligning efforts of the federal, provincial and local governments will mean better policy outcomes that will pay significant dividends in the form of healthier citizens, stronger communities and more robust economies.

Justification of Recommendation:

1. An update to *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* will build on the success and learnings to date, and provide a framework for additional support that is urgently needed from the other orders of government, particularly for permanent supportive housing. It should be noted that the advice around the need for permanent supportive housing comes from several Council initiatives including Urban Isolation and Mental Health, Housing and End Poverty Edmonton.
2. A letter to other stakeholders will foster support among key partners to add this focus to the work supported by the plan.