



Committee Report

To:	Chair Nielsen and Members of the Grey County Community Services Committee
Committee Date:	April 25 2023
Subject / Report No:	CSR-CS-09-23
Title:	Winter Short Term Shelter Program
Prepared by:	Josh Gibson, Manager Housing Programs
Reviewed by:	Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	County-wide
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW81-23; Endorsed by County Council June 8, 2023, per Resolution CC38-23.

Recommendation

- 1. That report CSR-CS-09-23 Winter Short Term Shelter Program be received for information.**

Executive Summary

The Grey County Short Term Shelter Program launched in September of 2022. Six months into the program and through the first winter season this report provides an overview of some challenges, positive outcomes, and opportunities for moving forward.

Background and Discussion

How does this program help?

The Grey County Short Term Shelter Program (STSP) aims to support members of the community who are experiencing a lack of housing. Clients who are unhoused can access the program by speaking with a Grey County intake worker during business hours or calling 211 after hours and on weekends. If no alternate housing option can be immediately identified, they are placed in a local motel on a short term basis. STSP is most active during the winter months (December to April).

The program is outreach focused with an emphasis on diversion from motel whenever possible. Diversion is a term used to describe the intake process, which seeks information about a households most recent housing loss and provides options for

transportation, or other services to facilitate an opportunity for an individual or family to stay temporarily with family or friends willing to host them. This diversion does not exclude individuals from accessing the available financial assistance programs available to support a move to longer term accommodations.

To be eligible for the program individuals or families need to be Grey County residents or have a significant tie to the community. To remain in the motel program, participants need to be engaged with outreach staff completing housing plan action items and following the programs safety rules.

Staff attempt to identify the individual needs of the participants, including the reasons for homelessness using their housing history and support individuals with referrals and options to reduce these barriers moving forward.

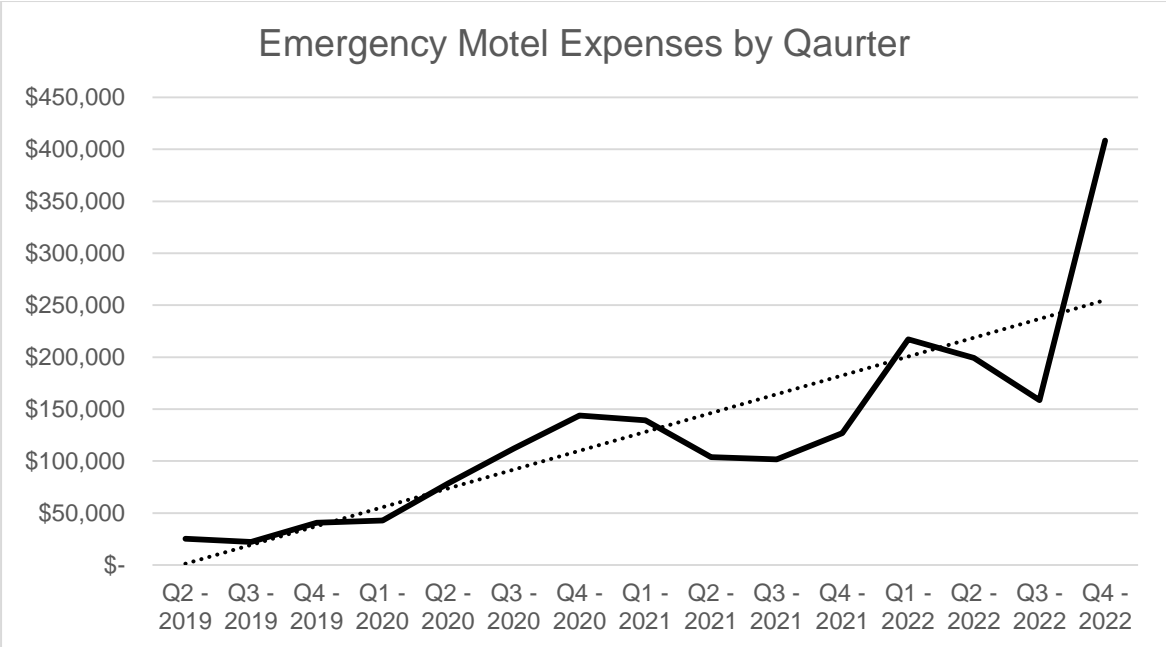
To access the program members of the community can contact Grey County Housing office during business hours to speak with an intake worker, after hours and on weekends this intake is performed through 211. Options are also available for e-mail and texting during business hours.

Increasing Need, Costs and Trends

Homelessness is a rising issue provincially and Grey County is not exempt from these pressures. The area is seeing a consistent trend of significant increased need over the past few years. Grey County was able to utilize Social Services Relief Fund to offset much of the increased cost however this funding ended in December 2022 and the amount of funding failed to keep pace with the demand.

Since launching the program in September 2022 until March 31, 2023, we experienced extremely high demand resulting in total motel costs just over \$944,000. This cost supported 8,210 nights of emergency shelter for individuals and families without housing.

The most concerning trend within Grey County is the increased need for Emergency Shelter expenses. There have been significant increases in costs in the past 3 years most sharply this past winter as intake numbers drastically rose. In addition, the difficulty to find appropriate housing options was a consistent challenge to allow for outflow from the Motel program. The lack of appropriate housing outflow options led to longer, more expensive stays within the program on average due to length of stay. The increased number of spaces utilized averaged over 43 rooms nightly during December 2022 to March 2022.



Since September 2022, 273 unique adults and 23 children accessed the program for 1 or more stays within the STSP. The average length of stay per household was just over 40 days.

Despite staff efforts to increase space availability by more than 3 times previous average levels of stock during the winter the program experienced some difficulty sheltering individuals. Most commonly due to lack of space within the motel system as well as the motel proprietors having a decision around who can access their spaces.

Some of the costs associated with the program include damages. The participants are at risk of experiencing a higher level of needs due to homelessness. Over the 6-month period more than 65% of program participants disclosed a combination of two or more morbidities. The morbidities include Physical Health concerns, Mental Health Concerns and Substance Use Disorders.

Accessing support for individuals experiencing difficulties in addition to their homelessness is a challenge. In order to be successful in a transition to long term accommodations continued support is required which is not currently easy to obtain due to lack of resources. With newly announced funding in the 2023 Provincial budget Program staff will attempt to identify any new options for participants to secure additional supports.

Positive Outcomes

The focus of the new program puts a priority on meaningful outreach activities. For the STSP program that meant going to the motel to meet face to face with participants five days a week to work on housing plans, check in on needs, and assist with referrals.

The frontline Housing Case Coordinators found this approach led to better relationship building with participants and allowed staff to provide increased support in a housing search.

In the past 6 months 52 households have been housed off the Grey County By-Name List. Most of these individuals were in motel periodically over the winter months. Of the 52 participants housed, 35 remain housed as of April 1, 2023. With additional outreach for people transitioning from homelessness there is opportunity for this success rate to improve in the coming year.

Having the Short Term Shelter Program delivered by Grey County allows staff to streamline complementary programs, for clients in motel we can provide rapid pre-approved access to Grey County Sustainable Housing Benefit to assist with last month's rent allowing them to move into new rentals. In addition, we are able to connect participants directly with applications for rent supplements to allow them a chance at a private market rental.

Finally, our close relationship with local landlords and non-profits has allowed us access to some affordable options for participants within the program.

Next Steps

With the conclusion of the first winter season of operating the program we will transition staff throughout April into May towards meeting people in the community experiencing unsheltered housing.

Traditionally during the summer months, locally there is increased transiency in the community, for this reason staff focus will be shifting to doing outreach at locations known to be occupied to provide supports.

The number of rooms available during the summer months will reduce due to motels renting space to the private market, the program need to reduce costs to save for the winter season when outdoor sheltering is a higher risk and a traditionally lower demand for rooms.

Planning for next winter is also underway, outlined in more detail in report CSR-CS-10-23 our Homelessness Prevention Program funding will be used to increase options for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness who have traditionally been unable to access a motel stay.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

None.

Financial and Resource Implications

Program is funded annually by Homelessness Prevention Program funding. Excess need in the community could see future impacts on the levy at council's discretion if provincially provided funding does not keep pace with costs of running a short-term shelter program.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Finance
- External: Grey Bruce Homelessness Response Steering Committee

Appendices and Attachments

None.