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**Date** July 6, 2022 **Report No.** 2022-362

**To** Chair and Members  
Social Services Committee

**From** Marlene Miranda, General Manager  
Community Services & Social Development

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## 1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item [ ]  
Item For Consideration [X]

## 2.0 Topic Housing Stability Services and Reaching Home Update Report [Financial Impact: None]

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## 3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report (2022-362) Housing Stability Services and Reaching Home Update Report BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to implement immediate recommendations as listed in Table 2: Recommendations for Immediate Implementation of the report; and
- C. THAT the City Clerk BE DIRECTED to forward a copy of the final resolution and staff report to the County of Brant.

## 4.0 Executive Summary

This report is intended to update Council on the achievements of the implementation of the Reaching Home program, as well as key milestones that have been met by City Staff and Community Partners. In addition, this report will include recommended allocations of the additional funding received under the Reaching Home program stream, which are in line with recommendations from

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the *Brantford Shelter System: Recommendations to Address Current & Future Demand Report* by OrgCode Consulting Inc., which completed a robust program and shelter system review. The recommendations are intended to address identified system gaps and to continue to provide services and supports for the City and County's most vulnerable population.

Beginning in 2019, the City as the Service Manager for homelessness programming entered into an agreement with the Federal Government (Employment and Social Development Canada) under the Reaching Home program to deliver three key milestones which include the following timelines, two of which have already been achieved as per Report 2022-301 (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) First Quarter Report and Homelessness By-Name List Information Update):

- 50% reduction in Chronic Homelessness by 2027/2028
- Implementation of Coordinated Access by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 (completed)
- Implementation of a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. (completed)

Under the guidance of the Coordinated Access Advisory Committee, which is comprised of 8 homeless serving organizations within the City and County, the community of Brantford and Brant has successfully completed all three phases of implementation of a homelessness coordinated access system. On December 10, 2021, the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) as the homelessness serving entity for both County and City received confirmation from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) that our community had achieved the Reaching Home level of Coordinated Access. This is a significant achievement as Brantford-Brant is the 14<sup>th</sup> community in Canada to be confirmed by CAEH.

In addition, the Reaching Home Program required that the Community Entity, also referred to as the Service Manager, have a fully operational By-Name List (BNL) in place by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. This requirement was achieved and is now fully operational. The City, as CMSM, received confirmation of reaching a quality BNL on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The BNL Management Policy created by Housing and Homelessness Departmental staff, with input from the Coordinated Access Advisory Committee, has received praise and recognition from the national organization called Built For Zero (BFZ) Canada, and the Community Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) and is currently being showcased on their websites as a resource for other communities, which can be found by visiting <https://bfzcanada.ca> or <https://caeh.ca/bright-spot-brantford-brant>.

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These significant achievements cannot be understated, particularly as they were implemented within the last two years, in the midst of a global pandemic. City Staff and community partners continue to work to improve and administer a better system of care, having developed key strategies such as working towards shared goals, adopting clear policies and procedures, and maintaining effective communication with community partners. This work with community partners is imperative to taking the next step towards ending chronic homelessness in Brantford-Brant.

## 5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is threefold: a) to provide information about the implementation of the *Reaching Home* program; b) to provide recommendations intended to improve the homelessness system of care based on the data collected through the coordinated access system; c) to provide recommendations based on findings from the shelter and homelessness consultation that took place during the winter of 2021 utilizing the Reaching Home Funding as outlined in this staff report.

## 6.0 Background

As part of Budget 2021, the Government of Canada announced incremental funding of \$567.2 million for Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy over two years, starting in 2022-2023.

This additional funding was provided to help communities extend their response to COVID-19 and provide them with the flexibility to use these investments to meet local homelessness needs and priorities, such as:

- extending COVID-19 measures for those experiencing homelessness;
- finding permanent housing for those temporarily housed; and
- reducing the inflow into homelessness, including homelessness prevention and shelter diversions activities

The additional funding was also provided to support communities and funding recipients to shifting to longer-term housing approaches such as housing supports, and solutions that prevent and reduce chronic homelessness and the return to homeless.

Included in the Reaching Home funding is Community Capacity Initiative Funding. At present, these amounts remain unchanged from the initial allocations provided in 2019. This funding can be used towards the implementation of a coordinated access in following ways;

- hiring a project manager to oversee local implementation;
- implementation and maintenance of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, the City was notified that as a designated *Reaching Home Community* we would be in receipt of additional incremental funding allocations to complement our current Reaching Home allocations, beginning in 2022-2023. Below represents the funding that has been received to date, as well the enhanced funding for the next two years. Following the announcement of the additional funding and finalization of the OrgCode consultation at the end of March, staff engaged with community partners within the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System who are responsible for delivering homelessness services in order to provide a comprehensive report back to council with recommendations that will better serve the homelessness system with the use of these additional incremental funding amounts.

Table 1 - Reaching Home Funding Commitments 2019-2024

YEARS	BASE FUNDING AMOUNT PLUS INCREMENTAL FUNDING	COMMUNITY CAPACITY & INNOVATION (CCI)
2019-2020	\$236,107	\$71,180
2020-2021	\$236,107	\$61,180
2021-2022	\$287,761 + \$866,380	\$61,180
2022-2023	\$287,761 + \$803,898	\$56,680
2023-2024	\$287,761 + \$791,867	\$56,680

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## **7.0 Corporate Policy Context**

This report supports City Council's 2021-2022 priority number two: "Meaningful supports are in place for those most in need in the community". In particular, the information and actions described in this report support Brantford being recognized as a safe and healthy community – one that promotes and enables the well-being of its citizens. This report also supports the County of Brant's 2019-2023 Strategic Priorities: "Healthy, safe and engaged citizens", with the goal of offering programs, services, facilities, and events to enhance residents quality of life.

## **8.0 Input From Other Sources**

Staff within the Community Services and Social Development Commission, Legal Services, Procurement and Purchasing Services, and Human Resources provided input and assistance with this report, as well as organizations within the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC), Community Advisory Board (CAB), and persons with lived experience.

## **9.0 Analysis**

### **9.1 Reaching Home Program**

*Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* (RH) is intended to support Canada's first-ever National Housing Strategy. Reaching Home was designed to work with communities to reduce chronic homelessness in Canada by 50% by 2027. Designated Reaching Home communities are able to determine how funds are spent through consultation and collaboration with stakeholders in identifying key priorities to address and prevent homelessness based on local needs. Reaching Home will fund activities that contribute to the objectives of the program while reflecting local realities and community needs and opportunities. The eligible activities and expenses are grouped into 5 categories which include Housing Services, Prevention and Diversion Services, Health and Medical Services, Client Support Services, and Capital Investments.

Decisions on investing in local priorities are undertaken through a comprehensive community planning process through a mechanism known as the Community Advisory Board (CAB). A Community Plan is developed and updated annually. Service Canada requires that a Community Entity (CE) administer the program at the local level. The City has served as the CE for the federal homelessness funding since it began in 2007 as the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, with the current Reaching Home Program in place until

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March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The City of Brantford Community Services and Social Development Commission has been identified as the Community Entity (CE) through an agreement with the Federal Government of Canada to manage Reaching Home funding and to implement the Community Plan as required by the Federal Program.

While in review of the OrgCode report recommendations with community partners, staff utilized up to date data that had been collected through the HIFIS system, and By-Name List, when identifying which recommendations provided by OrgCode were of immediate need in the system to better support clients. It was noted that of the 447 unique individuals active on the City's By-Name List, 126 had stated that they had returned to homelessness from secure and stable housing within the last 12 months when re-entering our system. Based on this data, City staff and community partners concluded that the need for additional housing stability work, and in-home supports was of top priority in order for clients to remain housed, and avoid reentering the shelter system.

In addition, Diversion Programming data was reviewed during these consultations with providers based on the recommendation from the OrgCode report. Between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 a total of 379 individuals engaged in diversion services, 53% (201 individuals) were successfully diverted from emergency shelter accommodations, and 39% (147 individuals) were referred to emergency shelter accommodations. With roughly 50% of clients attempting to enter the system being successfully diverted, City staff and providers agree that the Diversion Program should remain in place.

## **9.2 Org Code Shelter System Consultation and Homelessness Program Recommendations**

Commencing in December 2021, City staff retained consulting services provided by OrgCode Consulting Inc. in order to evaluate the current pressures and gaps or barriers in the existing shelter and homelessness system; obtain recommendations on the size and form of the system for the short, medium, and long term, inclusive of gender specific recommendations; and also receive recommendations on housing stability supports and programs in order to maintain an appropriate balance between the size of the shelter system and necessity of housing stability solutions. The final report was generated in March, 2022, and the consultation process came at no cost to the City, as Social Service Relief Funding Phase 4 was utilized for this project as referenced in Report 2022-263 (COVID-19 Social Services Relief Phase 4 Funding Update & Phase 5 Investment Plan).

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Utilizing input gathered through consultation with shelter providers in Brantford, discussions with City staff, and analysis of data from various orders of government and government agencies, the final draft was produced in late March 2022. Following Org Code's submission of the final draft report, City staff met with shelter providers and agencies within the homeless system starting with an initial presentation of the recommendations, and requesting initial verbal and written feedback that were taken into account as part of the recommendations referenced in this report.

There were a total of 10 recommendations for immediate, medium and long-term implementation that have been divided into 3 separate categories; Programs and Services, Shelter Capacity by Population Group, and Long-Term Facility and Program Recommendations. Immediate implementation for Programs and Services were to begin in 2022, while the medium and longer term projects had recommended implementation dates ranging from 2023 to 2026.

As mentioned, the top 5 recommendations listed in Table 1 below, were vetted through the Brantford-Brant Homeless System of Care and supported by the Community Advisory Board. In addition, City Staff also gathered feedback from persons with lived experience, through a Community/Client Consultation that took place at the Brantford Public Library on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022. City staff, community partners, and those with lived experience are in agreement that these recommendations be implemented immediately, in order to best support the homelessness system of care, and alleviate current pressures on the system. Included in Table 2, are recommendations that will require additional conversation and investigation, along with recommendations that are already being implemented throughout the system. Staff will report back on these longer term recommendations once adequate investigation is completed, with evidence to support longer term need. These recommendations will come at no cost to the City, as additional Reaching Home funding has been received.

Staff's engagement with community provider groups, in review of the recommendations in detail, was used as a basis for recommended allocations of the additional Reaching Home funding. The body of the report is reflecting what was heard by the community, stakeholders, and persons with lived experience.

### **9.3 Short Term Homelessness Program Recommendations**

Based on all the data reviewed and analyzed, the short term recommendations utilizing Reaching Home funding are summarized as follows. The below amounts are estimates that will be finalized pending approval, but will fall within the allocated amounts and are pending any applicable procurement process.

**Table 2 - Recommendations for Immediate Implementation**

<b>Top 5 Program and Shelter Capacity Recommendations for Immediate Implementation</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make an investment to housing stability services in the amount of at least \$300,000 per year to provide adequate supports to keep at least 60 households housed per year, and measure whether there is a decrease in returns to homelessness. This funding amount will be able to support the hiring of up to 4 Housing Stability Workers for the homelessness system. Staff will follow the appropriate and formal RFP process as per purchasing and procurement policy to add these positions to the system.</li> </ul>	\$300,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contingency coverage for additional shelter bed capacity at adult shelter locations to support system pressures. Up-to five additional beds will be allotted to locations to support mixed genders.</li> </ul>	\$250,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue investment in diversion pilot and prevention programming at the same or greater rate than current allocation of funds.</li> </ul>	\$150,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure there are non-congregate shelter options as part of the system of care, especially for individual adults and couples without dependents (with them).</li> </ul>	\$150,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain increased shelter bed capacity at youth shelter location to support system pressures.</li> </ul>	\$50,000
<b>Total Reaching Home Investment 22/23</b>	<b>\$900,000</b>

**Investment to Housing Stability Work** - To summarize, the investment in additional housing stability work is greatly needed within the City and County. Housing Stability Workers would be able to provide those in-home supports to ensure tenancy is maintained, while continuing to work on life goals in the process through a wraparound approach.

**Additional Shelter Space** - Throughout the course of 2021, and particularly the colder months, staff and providers understood the need for additional shelter



beds throughout the system. With the use of additional Provincial Grant funding, staff and providers were able to flex space as required to ensure our homeless population had a place to stay, especially during a record breaking season for cold weather alerts. This recommendation to use Reaching Home for contingency coverage throughout these months would ensure that adequate shelter space is made available, and more clients are able to access beds. Further consideration on the allocation of these additional beds will take place during the formal shelter RFP process that will be occurring in the fall of 2022 for the overall shelter system. Staff will follow the appropriate and formal RFP process as per purchasing and procurement policy. In addition, Reaching Home funding would be able to maintain the current bed numbers at Cornerstone (formerly Youth Resource Centre). These youth beds are consistently running at 100% capacity, and both staff and community partners believe that these beds are greatly needed in the system.

**Continuation of Shelter Diversion Program** - Beginning in June of 2021, the Housing Resource Centre hired a dedicated staff member to roll out a Pilot Diversion Program, with the intent of diverting more folks away from entering the homeless system by way of connecting back to existing supports, working with clients on financial management skills and life skills, as well as maintaining current tenancies to avoid evictions. This program has been very successful to date, and should remain in place as agreed upon through a series of consultations, and noting that diversion and prevention is a key Reaching Home program objective.

**Non Congregate Shelter Options** - As part of the Org Code recommendations, City staff and community partners agreed that additional non-congregate shelter options should be made available for clients within, or entering the system. Non-congregate shelter options would provide space for couples with or without dependents, as well as provide space for clients with mobility and medical needs that may otherwise not be a great fit in a congregate setting. Staff would have to find adequate space to run such a program, however realize the need for this option. Staff will report back once sufficient investigation has been completed in offering this type of sheltering option, and the feasibility of running such a program.

#### **9.4 Medium and Long-Term Homelessness Programming and Shelter Recommendations**

As referenced, in addition to the immediate recommendations for programming and supports, as well as shelter capacity, medium and long-term

recommendations were included in the report developed by Org-Code that also went through a series of discussions with Community Partners. These recommendations, along with recommendations that have already been implemented within the homelessness system, will require adequate investigation. Staff will continue with those recommendations already in place, and will report back following consultation and investigation on the longer term recommendations.

**Table 3 - Recommendations for Medium and Longer Term Implementation**

<b>Programs and Shelter Recommendations for Medium and Long-Term Implementation</b>	<b>Approximate Cost/Status</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2026, create a new shelter facility (new development or acquisition and rehabilitation) that can accommodate individual adults, couples without dependents (with them), and, winter overflow capacity.</li> </ul>	Further analysis to be completed, pending Council direction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate supportive housing and deeply affordable housing for individual adults and couples within the new shelter building, and other resources that assist with helping people exit homelessness.</li> </ul>	Further analysis to be completed, pending Council direction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further develop policy and programming when a shelter guest is banned from services, and increase staff training on de-escalation.</li> </ul>	In Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training and coaching to the non-profit sector that is engaged in assisting households in accessing housing and maintaining housing, to improve housing support services, and create a community of practice while increasing the housing focus of shelter operations</li> </ul>	2023 Work Plan Item
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor shelter occupancy by population group throughout 2022, and if occupancy is sustained at or above 90% for three or more consecutive months, starting in 2023 increase capacity within the following likely ranges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Up to 12 additional beds for families and individual women;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Further Analysis and engagement with Stakeholders to identify appropriate process and feasibility.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ 8-18 additional beds for individual adults (mixed gender);</li><li>➤ 2-6 additional beds for couples without dependents (with them); and,</li><li>➤ 0-4 additional beds for youth;</li><li>➤ Up to 24 additional seasonal beds, from late fall (approximately November) until spring (approximately the end of April) annually to assist more unsheltered people access shelter in winter months</li></ul>	
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## 10.0 Financial Implications

Reaching Home is 100% federally funded and includes an amount for administrative overhead. Should this funding be eliminated or reduced, the programs referenced in this report would wind down.

## 11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

None

## 12.0 Conclusion

Through the delivery of the Reaching Home project, the City continues to show its long-term commitment to delivering homelessness services through its leadership role as the community's homelessness services system manager. While implementing HIFIS and Coordinated Access are mandatory deliverables of the Reaching Home program, the successful implementation of these components has better positioned the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care to respond to the needs of the most marginalized and at risk members of our community.

Based on the recommendations in this report, City staff and community partners have identified these recommendations as being top priority to continue advancing the system towards the end goal of reducing chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027/28, as well as shifting focus towards housing stability for all and a housing first model. The short term recommendations would provide much needed services to alleviate pressures the system is facing.



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Marlene Miranda, General Manager  
Community Services & Social Development

Reviewed By:

Tricia Givens, M.Sc.(PI), MCIP, RPP  
Director, Housing & Homelessness Services

Prepared By:

Anthony Dolcetti, Manager, Housing Stability

Attachments:

Report: Org Code Consulting Inc. The Brantford Shelter System: Recommendations to  
Address Current & Future Demand

Copy to:

Reaching Home Community Advisory Board

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the  
recommendation section.

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no