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Date June 7, 2023 **Report No.** 2023-330

To Chair and Members
Social Services Committee

From Aaron Wallace, Acting General Manager
Community Services & Social Development

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item ☐
Item For Consideration ☒

2.0 Topic Reaching Home Update Report [Financial Impact: None]

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report 2023-330 Reaching Home Update Report BE RECEIVED; and;
- B. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to implement the recommendations as listed in 2023-24 Reaching Home Investment Plan; 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

Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (RH) is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support and funding to Designated Communities (urban centres), Indigenous communities, territorial communities and rural and remote communities across Canada.

The City of Brantford is the designated Community Entity (CE) for the Federal Reaching Home program and is responsible for ensuring that Reaching Home funds are used for activities that contribute to the objectives of the program while reflecting local realities and community needs and opportunities.

The federal Reaching Home funding stream complements the provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding stream in supporting housing stability programming the City of Brantford as the Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness has oversight responsibility for. Services funded by Reaching Home enhance program delivery and support in the emergency sheltering system and by the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC).

This report is to update Council on key 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 a high level overview of the Reaching Home investment plan for 2023-2024 and the recommended allocations received under the Reaching Home program stream. The recommendations within the investment plan are intended to address identified system gaps and to continue to provide services and supports for the City and County's most vulnerable population.

This report will also highlight the successes of programs that were implemented and supported over the past year through the Reaching Home program through the investment plan that was brought forward as per Report 2022-362.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide general information about the Federal Reaching Home program and funding stream, and an overview of the 2023-24 Reaching Home Investment Plan (IP).

6.0 Background

Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (RH) is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support and funding to Designated Communities (urban centres), Indigenous communities, territorial communities and rural and remote communities across Canada. The Reaching Home program is intended to support Canada's first-ever National Housing Strategy.

Reaching Home communities in consultation and with approval from the Community Advisory Board (CAB), are able to determine how funds are spent to address and prevent homelessness based on local needs.

Under the Reaching Home program, the City of Brantford as the Community Entity is required to complete and deliver the following three key milestones:

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

Two of the three milestones have been met. Staff and community partners within the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC) continue to work towards the final milestone of reducing chronic homelessness in the community by 50% come 2027-2028.

Reaching Home funds 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 five categories of activities directed at achieving the program objective of preventing and reducing homelessness:

- Housing Services;
- Prevention and Shelter Diversion;
- Health and Medical Services;
- Client Support Services; and
- Capital Investments.

In 2021, the Government of Canada announced additional funding under the Reaching Home program intended to assist communities through the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce inflow into homelessness, and accelerate outflow by keep more individuals and families housed. The City as a designated *Reaching Home Community*, received additional incremental funding allocations to complement current Reaching Home allocations.

Table 1 below represents the funding that has been received to date, including the enhanced funding and current allocations for 2023-2024.

As part of the incremental and base funding that the City of Brantford has received is the Community Capacity Initiative Funding (CCI). This funding was 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).

Table 1 - Reaching Home Funding Commitments 2019-2024

YEAR	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

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

This report supports:

- City of Brantford Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Theme 6 (b): invest in a long-term strategy and plan to manage the homelessness crisis, inclusive of the related issues of mental health and addiction issues and safety and security concerns;
- 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; and

- The Community Services and Social Development (CSSD) Commission Vision Plan “Making Life Better, Every Day”, specifically P1.3 – Promote solutions to ensure individuals and families who are unhoused or at highest risk for chronic homelessness are housed and experience housing stability.

8.0 Input From Other Sources

Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC)

9.0 Analysis

As referenced in Report 2022-362, [*Housing Stability Services and Reaching Home Update Report*](#) the 2022-2023 Reaching Home investment plan included recommendations for immediate and short-term implementation in order to enhance the services within the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care. The recommendations for immediate implementation included the following;

- An investment into a Housing Stability Worker Program to provide in-home supports to assist with eviction prevention to keep more individuals and families housed;
- Contingency coverage for additional shelter bed capacity at adult shelter locations to support system pressures through the winter months;
- Continued investment into diversion and prevention programming;
- Increased shelter bed capacity at the youth shelter location to alleviate system pressures; and
- Investigation and investment into non-congregate sheltering options.

In addition to these recommendations, staff utilized Reaching Home funding to support the City’s only hygiene station at the Grand River Community Health Centre (GRCHC), as well as Registry Week events that took place in April 2023.

Shelter Diversion and Diversion Pilot Data

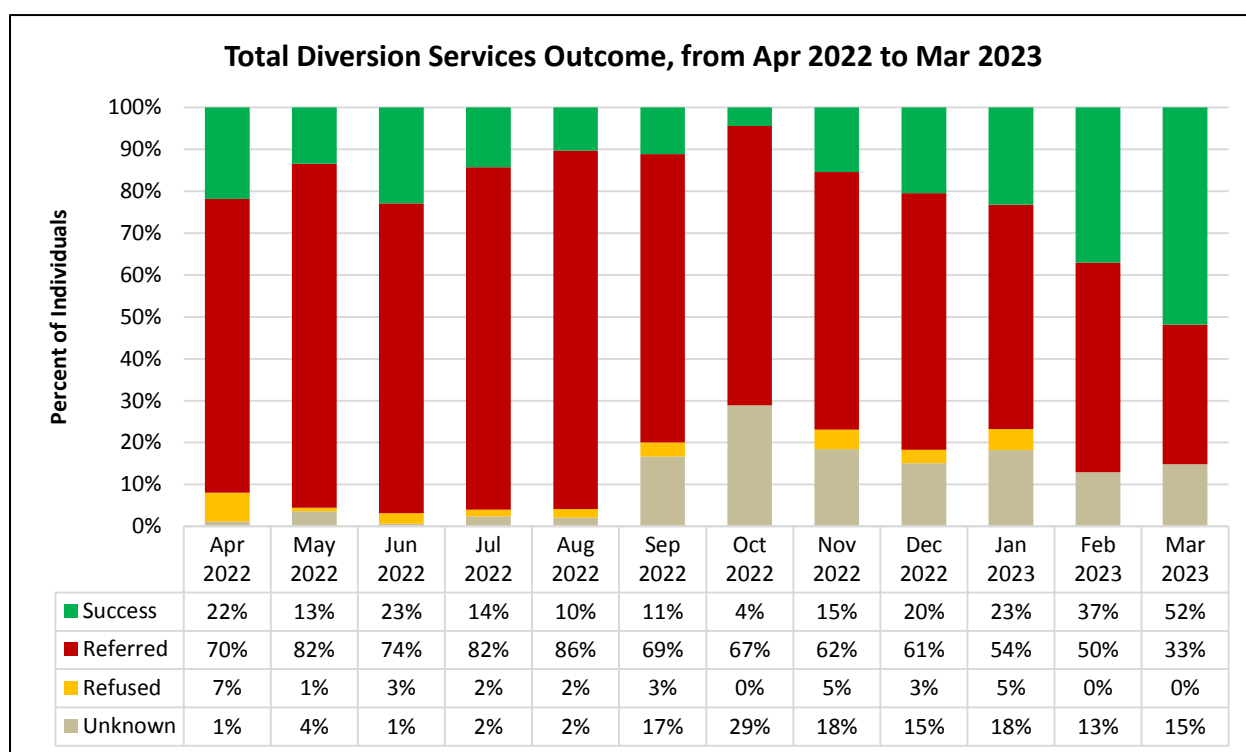
The Housing Resource Centre and emergency shelter providers within the system use the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to support case management activities, to deliver homelessness prevention services, and to document shelter diversion assistance and outcomes.

Staff within the emergency shelter system (ESS) are expected to conduct diversion surveys with new clients seeking emergency shelter in order to divert shelter stays. Seeking out safe alternate arrangements, connections to natural supports, or appropriate out of municipality diversion is always a preferred resolution. Shelter diversion outcomes are tracked in HIFIS.

Using Reaching Home funding, an additional financial commitment was made to support the continuation of a diversion pilot program that was initially launched in 2021. A dedicated shelter diversion worker was funded at the Housing Resource Centre. The intent of this pilot program was to provide immediate shelter diversion at a main point of entry into the ESS.

Overall, staff within the ESS interacted with a total of 1,052 unique clients during the reporting period of April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

Chart 1 - Diversion Services Outcomes



Of the total 1,052 individuals engaged in diversion services in the reporting period;

- 70% (n = 733) were referred to emergency shelter accommodations;
- 19% (n = 195) were successfully diverted (with or without supports);

- 9% (n = 95), the outcome of diversion was absent or unknown; and
- 3% (n = 29) declined diversion assistance.

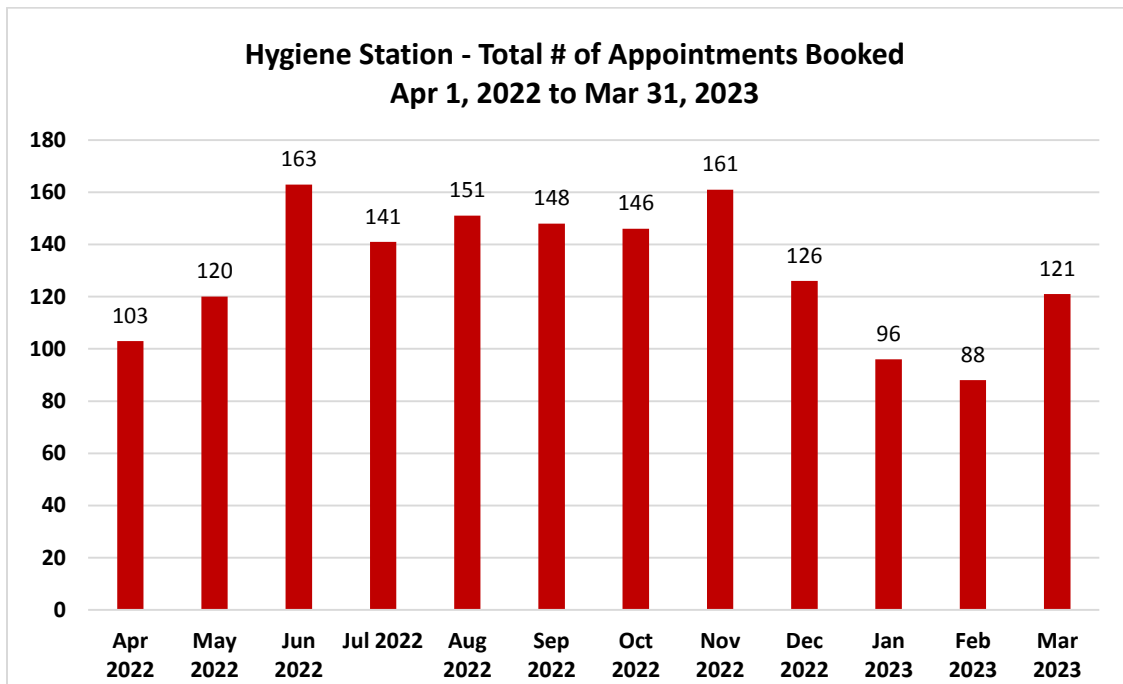
Hygiene Station Data

The Grand River Community Health Centre (GRCHC) provides access to a hygiene station which includes shower and bathroom facilities along with a refreshment cart to those in the community who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed.

This program is currently supported by Reaching Home funding and has been a great success in the community. Clients who book the hygiene station are also able to access laundry facilities and individual support with tasks such as completing referral forms or making appointments with social service agencies.

During the reporting period of April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, a total of 1,564 appointments were booked at the hygiene station.

Chart 2 - Hygiene Station Data



Increases to Shelter Occupancy

Using Reaching Home funding, a total of 20 adult beds were added to the Emergency Sheltering System (ESS) as part of the City's winter response to ensure adequate sheltering options were available from December 1, 2022 until April 30, 2023.

These beds were made available at Rosewood House and Salvation Army Booth Centre and were in addition to the 50 permanently funded beds for adults at these locations¹.

Effective January 1, 2023, total capacity at Cornerstone House youth shelter was increased from eight (8) to ten (10) by using Reaching Home funding to add an additional two beds.

2023 Registry Week Event

Staff from the Housing and Homelessness Services Department, with support from over 20 community organizations, coordinated a Registry Week magnet event that promoted the connection of individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness in Brantford with a range of relevant services to support improved well-being. The event facilitated the provision of basic needs items, education on available harm reduction services, and connection to housing supports, complemented by distribution of community meals and the delivery of free personal care services.

This event was coordinated to occur jointly with the 2023 Point in Time (PiT) Count, a strategic approach to connecting with many individuals experiencing homelessness for data collection purposes by encouraging attendance at a single location.

Outreach volunteers completed over 160 surveys throughout the City of Brantford and across designated locations within the County of Brant, and observed over 200 individuals experiencing homelessness throughout the community.

Data from this enumeration event will be brought forward to Committee and Council in a report in Q3 2023.

¹ Of the 50 permanent adult beds at these locations, Rosewood House is funded for 30 beds and Salvation Army Booth Centre is funded for 20 beds.

9.1 2023-2024 Reaching Home Investment Plan

After consultation with the Community Advisory Board (CAB), the 2023-2024 Reaching Home Investment Plan received approval from the CAB in May 2023.

The approved plan consists of recommendations for immediate implementation and for program continuation.

2023-2024 Reaching Home Investment Plan	Approximate Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continued investment to the Housing Stability Worker Pilot Program	\$400,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Investment in the City of Brantford Encampment Network (COBEN) Housing-Bylaw Pilot Program	\$330,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing Stability Project Coordinator and Community Development Coordinator salaries and benefits	\$220,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continued investment to support the Hygiene Station through Grand River Community Health Care (GRCHC)	\$70,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Investment to create storage program for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness	\$60,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assist with hotel/motel and emergency shelter bed overflow capacity during seasonal cold alerts (if required)	\$60,000
Total Reaching Home Investment 2023-2024	\$1,140,000

Housing Stability Worker (HSW) Pilot Program

The continued investment in the Housing Stability Worker program is greatly needed within the City and County. Housing Stability Workers are providing in-home supports to households in an effort to ensure tenancies are maintained and eviction is prevented. HSWs develop individualized plans with households to work on identified housing stability goals using a wraparound approach in coordinating service delivery partners and intensive case management. As the program evolves, the intent is that HSWs will work directly with individuals leaving the emergency sheltering system for permanent housing to help establish and maintain successful tenancies.

Hygiene Station

The Hygiene Station supported by GRCHC has provided tremendous value to individuals experiencing homelessness in providing access to shower stations as well as the ability to utilize laundry services. Coupled with these services, clients are able to connect directly with staff in order to complete referrals to agencies, and access in the moment supports.

City of Brantford Encampment Network (COBEN) Housing-Bylaw Pilot

Report 2022-362 *Housing Stability Services and Reaching Home Update Report* identified the need to continue investment in prevention and diversion services as well as client support services.

The City of Brantford Encampment Network (COBEN) process is led by the Housing and Homelessness Services Department and provides encampment response involving staff from the Housing Resource Centre, Bylaw and Property Standards, and Parks.

A service delivery gap has been identified in that Bylaw staff often engage with residents of an encampment and need access to information in real-time that is specific to Housing Stability such as the number of available emergency shelter beds².

The Community Development Coordinator role will work in lateral partnership with the Property Standards and Bylaw team. The position is part of Coordinated Access and the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care and is responsible for remaining apprised of supports such as the number of emergency shelter beds that are available, assessing and prioritizing current encampment residents' needs and providing referrals to appropriate organizations and services, and having a strong knowledge of community resources people experiencing homelessness can access.

Storage Program

The intent of this program is to provide those experiencing homelessness, specifically individuals residing in unsheltered locations, an opportunity to safely store items of value. This will allow individuals the opportunity to safely store and keep items of value that they otherwise would not have been able to due to a

² This information is available through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and changes as soon as a person accepts an emergency shelter bed or is discharged from the shelter system.

lack of space or ability to transport. The intent is to release a Request For Proposal by the end of Q2 2023 for this program.

10.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications with this report.

11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

There are no climate or environmental implications associated with this report.

12.0 Conclusion

The City of Brantford is the designated Community Entity (CE) for the Federal Reaching Home program and is responsible for ensuring that Reaching Home funds are used for activities that contribute to the objectives of the program while reflecting local realities and community needs and opportunities.

Through the delivery of the Federal Reaching Home program, the City continues to show its long-term commitment to delivering homelessness services through its leadership role as the CE for the program.

The federal Reaching Home funding stream complements the provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding stream in supporting housing stability programming the City of Brantford as the Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness has oversight responsibility for.

The City has been successful in the implementation of HIFIS, Coordinated Access, and By-Name List within the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care. The remaining goal of a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness by 2027-28 is the next objective to achieve.

Through the investment plan brought forward for 2023-24, the projects and programs that will be funded will continue to strengthen relationships within the BHSC, all while working towards better service and a reductions in chronic homelessness in Brantford-Brant.



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Attachments (if applicable)

NA

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