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Date December 6, 2023 **Report No.** 2023-550

To Chair and Members
Social Services Committee

From Brian Hutchings
Chief Administrative Officer
Acting Commissioner, Community Services and Social Development

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item [X]
Item For Consideration []

2.0 Topic **2023 Brantford-Brant Point-in-Time Count Report [Financial Impact: None]**

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report No. 2023-550 2023 Brantford-Brant Point-in-Time Count Report BE RECEIVED; and
- B. 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

The Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a community-level measure of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness that provides a picture of homelessness within a community. A PiT Count is comprised of two components: a PiT Count Enumeration and a Survey on Homelessness.

As part of the Federal Reaching Home Agreement, the City, as the Community Entity (CE), is required to complete an annual PiT Count.

To fulfill this requirement, community partners, staff, and trained volunteers from the homeless-serving sector participated in Brantford-Brant's Point-in-Time Count, and Registry Week event on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. This event counted 250 individuals who were experiencing homelessness on April 26, 2023, and surveyed 142 individuals to gain valuable input and insight regarding their personal histories, experiences, and needs.

In addition to the PiT Count, the City hosted a Registry Week event concurrently on April 26 which brought together homeless serving agencies and community partners within Brantford-Brant in one central location. The intent of the Registry Week event was to bring services together to provide supports for individuals experiencing homelessness, provide information and education about available services geared towards housing, food security, and income security, and add those individuals and households who provided consent to the By Name List.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to update Social Services Committee on the results of the Brantford-Brant 2023 Point-in-Time Count and the Registry Week event which took place on April 26, 2023.

6.0 Background

A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is an enumeration method that seeks to identify the number of people experiencing homelessness at one specific point in time. A PiT Count is required by all Reaching Home Communities under Canada's National Homelessness Strategy and is conducted every two years before April 30. The two primary components of the event are:

1. To count (enumerated) the number of individuals experiencing homelessness on single night; and
2. To administer a nation-wide survey to the homeless population to better understand their stories, experiences, and needs.

All communities use a similar PiT Count approach which includes a core set of survey questions. A consistent methodology is encouraged that helps guide communities in gathering essential information in an unbiased and non-judgmental manner. All information collected in the PiT Count is anonymous and cannot be traced back to any specific person. PiT homeless data only represents people staying in participating facilities and those who are approached by interviewer and consent to participating in the survey. While PiT

Count data should be considered a minimum estimate, the information collected provides local and national government with invaluable data to inform decision makers, planner, and service providers to help end homelessness in Canada.

The 2023 Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is the fourth enumeration of persons experiencing homelessness in Brantford and Brant County since 2016. The first PiT Count was completed in 2016 and the second PiT Count took place in 2018 as a joint PiT and Registry Week event. Staff completed the 2021 PiT Count during the global COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the count, Brantford-Brant was under a strict stay-at-home order, with limited capacity to facilitate community magnet events that would encourage individuals experiencing all forms of homelessness to participate.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

This report supports:

[Brantford-Brant Housing Stability Plan \(2014-2024\)](#)

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; and

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

Infrastructure Canada

[Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy](#)

Brantford Native Housing

Brantford Region Indigenous Support Centre (BRISC)

Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC)

Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Registry Week/PiT Count Planning Committee

9.0 Analysis

The 2023 Point in Time Count and the co-occurring Registry Week event took place on April 26, 2023.

9.1 Registry Week Event

Registry Week is an event that can be held in communities to coordinate outreach efforts and connect unsheltered individuals with services. The event was hosted on April 26th from 9AM-5PM at 1 Market Square, and was promoted on the City's social media page, through service providers, as well as having community posters delivered to local businesses.

The intent of a Registry Week Event is to create low-barrier opportunities to provide education and expand individuals' knowledge of available services, discuss and obtain consents for information sharing across service delivery partners, provide rapid assessments to help of appropriate individual housing placements, and create or enhance communication between community partners for the building of homelessness solutions.

Planning for this event began in 2022, and involved the collaboration of over 20 local agencies who provide a multitude of services. Agency participation in this event was in a multitude of capacities such as provision of food, information booths for resource sharing and service needs assessments, delivery of in-moment personal care services and facilitation of therapeutic activities.

9.2 Point In Time (PIT) Count

The Point in Time (PiT) Count involves the collection of data on the number of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night, and occurs every two years in municipalities across Canada. This includes an assessment of the experience of homelessness through a sheltered and unsheltered lenses and includes surveys of individuals residing outdoors, in motels, couch surfing, or those who are residing in institutions such as emergency shelters, hospitals, treatment centres and correctional institutions.

The objective of conducting this count is to better understand the community's needs, which will inform future program and service delivery. It also helps a community track their progress toward reducing homelessness.

The data is collected through the assistance of outreach volunteers who both tally the number of individuals who are observed to be experiencing

homelessness, as well as conduct surveys with consenting community members encountered on routes. Twenty (20) volunteers completed counts and surveys along 13 mapped routes.

Staff from the Housing and Homelessness Services Department provided in-person training to volunteers. This two-hour training covered information including:

- The social dynamics of homelessness;
- PiT Count 101 overview;
- Consent and confidentiality conversations;
- Safety procedures; and
- Scheduling, supplies and location logistics.

All volunteers were requested to sign confidentiality agreements to ensure any conversations with individuals participating in the survey remained private.

Based on available volunteers, survey groups were formed each with a designated person with relevant social services experience as an outreach lead. Volunteers were advised to walk routes in pairs or in full groups while surveying to ensure safety.

9.3 PIT Count Methodology

The PiT Count methodology follows national guidelines set by Infrastructure Canada.¹ Brantford-Brant conducted the homelessness surveys and the enumeration on April 26, 2023.

The methodology was approved by the local 2023 PiT Count Committee and included a count and survey for both sheltered and unsheltered individuals, a systems count, and an administrative data pull at all participating service providers to capture the number of individual stays on April 26, 2023.

Survey participation by any clients in emergency shelters was voluntary and clients could not be denied shelter services should they have declined participation in the PiT Count survey.

Individuals were screened by asking if they had participated in the survey that day, where they were planning to stay tonight, and for their consent to participate in the survey.

¹ <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/resources-ressources/point-in-time-guide-denombrement-ponctuel-eng.html>

Four hours of unsheltered PiT Count outreach was conducted and supported by 20 trained volunteers. Established routes from the 2021 PiT Count were utilized. These included walkable routes within the City, as well as routes that expanded into the County. The routes were comprised of high traffic locations, known locations where people experiencing homelessness often gather such as encampments, and hotel/motels. No individuals experiencing homelessness on the day of the PiT Count were observed within the County of Brant.

Volunteers conducting unsheltered surveys/outreach were provided with PiT Count survey supplies including surveys, pens and honorariums as well as relevant contact information of community agencies and emergency responders to provide to individuals encountered.

Volunteers were instructed to attempt to engage with every individual they encountered on their respective routes. Volunteers were trained on indicators of homelessness and were asked to document anyone who may be experiencing homelessness and unwilling or unable to participate. This includes physical indicators such as visibly sleeping in an outdoor location or travelling with basic needs such as a tent, tarp or bedding. Volunteers were also advised that people experiencing homelessness may not always be easily identified based on appearance, and it was encouraged to avoid making assumptions of circumstances by offering to survey and support all individuals encountered.

All PiT Count participants were provided with a \$10 gift card honorarium for their time and expertise. Participants were also offered a range of supplies at the Registry Week event location, including but not limited to toiletries, clothing, and snacks.

9.4 PiT Count Data Limitations

The PiT Count methodology is unable to capture everyone experiencing homelessness in a community. The PiT Count should be viewed as an estimated minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night and the data provided in this report is an estimate and almost certainly an undercount of the number of people experiencing homelessness on April 26, 2023.

Certain demographics within the homeless population are often harder to connect with during outreach activities due to their increased vulnerability, systemic barriers, and people experiencing hidden homelessness. This includes Indigenous peoples, women fleeing violence, LGBTQ2S+, Youth, people living temporarily with others without guarantee of continued residence or access to

permanent housing, and people accessing temporary rental accommodations without security of tenure. These groups are often overrepresented in those experiencing homelessness but underrepresented in data collection.

The PiT Count relies on self-reported information, which may impact the accuracy of the data collected. Individuals experiencing homelessness are a vulnerable population and many may choose not share certain information or may provide a generalized answer rather than specific details. It is also common for participants to feel uncomfortable and provide answers that the participant believes an interviewer would want to hear. Some survey questions address extremely personal topics such as past trauma including substance usage, mental health concerns, gender identity, and details around what lead the participant to homelessness. Due to the nature of these questions, the participant may choose to modify their answers to protect themselves or choose to not share this information with the interviewer.

9.5 2023 PiT Count Findings

Attached as Appendix A, is an infographic of the 2023 PiT Count that will be made available on the City of Brantford website.

On April 26, 2023, at least 250 people were experiencing homelessness in Brantford-Brant.

Of the 250 individuals:

- 136 (54%) individuals were emergency sheltered;
- 77 (31%) individuals were unsheltered;
- 20 individuals (8%) were observed as homeless and did not disclose or were unsure where they were staying;
- 12 individuals (5%) were couch-surfing;
- 4 individuals (2%) were accommodated in transitional housing; and
- 1 individual was living in public systems.

Of the 250 people experiencing homelessness, 142 individuals (57%) participated in the homeless needs survey.

Of these 142 individuals:

- 73% identified as male;
- 22% female; and
- 5% had another gender identity (e.g., transgender, Two-Spirit)

Congruent with other research there was a strong overrepresentation of vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness amongst those surveyed:

- 52% self-identified as Indigenous;
- 10% self-identified as LGBTQ2S+;
- 7% self-identified as a Veteran; and
- 3% self-identified as newcomers.

A wide range of ages were represented in the survey population with the average age of survey respondents being 41 and the majority surveyed (70%) being adults between the ages of 25-54:

- the youngest respondent was aged 18²; and
- the oldest surveyed adult was 70.

A large portion of respondents had their first experience with homelessness as a youth:

- 49% of general survey respondents first experienced homelessness as youth under the age of 25 while 53% of Indigenous respondents had their first experience of homelessness as a youth under the age of 25;
- 30% first experienced homelessness as a teenager under the age of 19.

The majority of survey respondents (78%) were single with no family members staying with them and 17% were accompanied by a partner, friend, family member, or dependents. Five (5) individuals had children with them. Of these families, three (3) reported to be living unsheltered, one (1) was residing in an emergency shelter, and one (1) was couch-surfing.

Of the people surveyed:

- 21% of respondents have lived in Brantford-Brant their entire lives;
- 49% have lived in the region five or more years;
- 82% have lived in Brantford-Brant for one year or more;
- 9% of respondents indicated that they lived in Brantford-Brant for less than one year; and
- 6% stated they have lived in the region for six or fewer months.

² Surveys were not conducted with individuals that identified under the age of 16.

Social Determinants of Health:

- 32% of all survey respondents experienced placement in foster care, a youth group home, or another child welfare program as a child or youth;
- 41% of Indigenous respondents indicated having been placed in foster care;
- 92% of survey respondents identify as having at least one health challenge:
 - 78% indicated a concern with substance use;
 - 65% indicated a mental health concern;
 - 44% reported an illness or medical condition;
 - 42% declared a physical limitation; and
 - 41% declared learning or cognitive limitations.
- 68% of survey respondents identified as being chronically homeless (homeless for a total time of six months or more over the past year).

The top three barriers to housing reported by survey respondents are:

- Cost of rent (74%)
- Lack of adequate income (65%), and
- Concerns with addictions (30%).

When asked about additional services or supports, 85% of respondents selected a wide range of needed services from a list that was provided to them. Of those that indicated a need for service, the most prominent service needs identified were:

- mental health services (64%),
- addiction and substance use services (62%),
- Indigenous services (36%),
- serious / ongoing medical condition (33%), and
- legal services (30%).

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 2023 Point in Time Count and the co-occurring Registry Week event took place on April 26, 2023, through which 250 individuals were counted who experienced homelessness on April 26, 2023. Valuable input and insight regarding personal histories, experiences, and needs were provided by 142 individuals who agreed to complete homelessness surveys.

Through continued efforts with community partners, the City as the Service Manager of Housing and Homelessness and as the Community Entity for Reaching Home, continues to work towards the continued enhancement of the homelessness system of care that provides support and serves the City and the County's most marginalized populations.



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Attachments:

Appendix A – 2023 PiT Count Infographic

Copy to: N/A

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