

Report Overview

Last year, Council directed staff to lease the former Tourism Office to the Region of Durham for the purpose of a Winter Warming Centre, in response to the growing issue of homelessness in our community. This report provides an update on the first year of use, and ongoing collaborations to support the unsheltered population in Clarington. Staff are recommending the continued use of the Tourism Office as a Winter Warming Centre.

1. Background

- 1.1 There are people in Clarington who are living without stable, permanent, appropriate housing.
- 1.2 The Regional Municipality of Durham is responsible for all social service delivery in all Durham municipalities, including Clarington, as mandated by the province.
- 1.3 In March 2024, Region of Durham Staff [presented an overview of the Regional homelessness system](#) to Council.

Winter Warming in Clarington

- 1.4 Warming Centres are not shelters; they operate on a temporary overnight basis during the winter months for those in need. Warming Centres provide a safe place for people to sleep when it is cold outside. Warmth and shelter are critical resources for health and safety, as people experiencing homelessness or those who are marginally housed are one of the most at-risk groups for cold-related illnesses.
- 1.5 For the winter season of 2023-2024, the Region of Durham operated a Winter Warming Centre in the basement of St. Paul's Church in downtown Bowmanville. This was the first time an overnight Winter Warming program was implemented in Clarington. While well-utilized, the location presented challenges from an accessibility perspective.
- 1.6 In October 2024, through [Report CAO-005-24](#), Council approved the lease of the former Tourism Office at 181 Liberty Street South, Bowmanville, to the Region of Durham for the purpose of an overnight Winter Warming Centre for the 2024-25 Winter season.
- 1.7 The Warming Centre, operated by Do Unto Others (DUO) accommodates up to 10 individuals. Regional staff indicated that the Warming Centre operated close to or at capacity for most of the winter season and that on some occasions, on very cold nights, unsheltered individuals were provided transportation to Oshawa warming centres due to capacity issues.

- 1.8 Regional staff have noted this location is ideal because it is decentralized while still being close to downtown Bowmanville, is fully accessible, and has a shower for users.
- 1.9 Due safety concerns with the lack of a sidewalk, the Region of Durham provided transportation (cab or Outreach Team vehicles) both to and from the Warming Centre. Although there were still some individuals that accessed the site by foot on an ad hoc basis; by and large, users of the Winter Warming Centre utilized this transportation. No issues were reported.

3. Local Initiatives

- 3.1 Staff have continued to meet on an ongoing basis with the Region of Durham; Clarington Library, Museum and Archives; and ICONIC (Integrated Community Outreach Network In Clarington), to identify opportunities to proactively collaborate and respond to homelessness locally.
- 3.2 ICONIC is a grassroots, volunteer group of faith-based leaders, community organizations, the Region, CLMA, and the Municipality who meet on a monthly basis to identify opportunities to work together to create an integrated community of care for the unsheltered population in Bowmanville.
- 3.3 ICONIC came together in a coordinated fashion to offer drop-in programming to those in need every day of the week in Bowmanville. Thanks to this, when individuals left the Warming Centre each morning, there was always a destination with food, shelter, support, and a built-in sense of community to attend each day.
- 3.4 The Clarington Library, Museum and Archives, in particular the Bowmanville Library location, continued to expand social services initiatives to offer additional support to those in need. This included student social workers; drop-in outreach programs from John Howard Society of Durham Region (JHSD) caseworkers; Newcomer Settlement Services with Community Development Council Durham; access to Ontario Disability Support Program caseworkers; and the food pantry.
- 3.5 Clarington Library, Museum and Archives indicated that there was a decrease in major incidents within the Bowmanville Library from Winter 2024 to Winter 2025, thanks to these strengthened and expanded community partnerships; a policy and procedure review; enhanced training, resources, and decision-making tools for staff; and the procurement of a security guard by the Municipality of Clarington.
- 3.6 Durham Region's Street Outreach Team increased local presence throughout the winter. This team provides 24/7 homelessness support to those in need, on both a proactive and on-call basis.

- 3.7 The Municipality of Clarington developed a [website](#) with a comprehensive list of all supports and resources available locally, including food banks, drop-in programs, and all other support services. This is kept up to date on an ongoing basis based on information from community partners.
- 3.8 Regional Staff have indicated that, thanks to the coordinated community efforts in Clarington and relatively low number of unsheltered population accounted for locally, there is not an identified need for a centralized hub service at this time.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Staff recommend that Council authorise the Deputy CAO/Solicitor to continue the lease of the former Tourism Office located at 181 Liberty Street South to The Regional Municipality of Durham, for the purposes of a Winter Warming Centre, from November to April for the 2025-26 winter season; with the lease to be reviewed at the end of the term. The Deputy CAO of Public Services has confirmed there is no municipal use for this space for the immediate future.
- 4.2 Staff will continue to meet with the Region of Durham and be a member of ICONIC to identify opportunities to support ongoing collaboration and information sharing as it relates to supporting those experiencing homelessness in our community.

5. Financial Considerations

- 5.1 Staff will work with The Regional Municipality of Durham to continue the lease for use of the former Tourism Office at 181 Liberty Street South for the Winter 2025-26 season, for a nominal rent.

6. Strategic Plan

C.2.5: Support the proactive management of community safety and well-being.

7. Climate Change

Not Applicable.

8. Concurrence

This report has been reviewed by the Deputy CAO of Legislative Services and the Deputy CAO of Public Services, who concur with the recommendations.

9. Conclusion

It is respectfully recommended that Council receive this report and approve the direction of the ongoing lease for the Winter Warming Centre.

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Attachments:

Not Applicable

Interested Parties:

List of Interested Parties available from Department.