

Province allocates \$36.7 million to Region to address homelessness



The Region of York will receive \$36,701,600 for programs aimed at preventing homelessness.

The allocation was announced last week at the Regional Headquarters in Newmarket by Dawn Gallagher Murphy, MPP for Newmarket-Aurora and is part of an Ontario-wide investment of an additional \$202 million each year for like programs and initiatives. The cash infusion brings a total yearly investment to nearly \$700 million.

‘This investment represents an over 40 per cent increase in funding, supporting vulnerable people in our Province,’ said Gallagher Murphy. ‘The funding will help more people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness find the right housing services and other supports. As part of this program, the Regional Municipality of York will receive \$36,701,600 and that is for fiscal 2023-2024 and I am proud to say that this represents a 76 per cent increase in an annual funding compared to 2022-2023 allocation of \$20,871,400.

‘This program gives local supportive housing service managers the flexibility to allocate funding where it is most needed; for example, to capital projects, as well as to make better use of existing resources. It reduces the red tape that service managers encounter and ensures the focus is on delivering support that the most vulnerable rely on every day, instead of spending time on administrative tasks and reporting. This increase in funding and the flexibility it allows will help support those who have fallen on hard times and are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness here in York Region by connecting them with the right housing services and other supports.’

Supportive housing, she said, combines long-term housing assistance with ‘individualized, flexible, and ongoing support services such as counselling, life-skills training, activities of daily living and behavioural supports,’ to help and enable people to live as independently as possible within their community.

‘We have heard from the municipal governments and local service managers their concerns that the previous funding model treated communities inequitably,’ said the MPP. ‘The funding model changes also addressed recommendations contained in the Auditor General’s 2021 Value for Money Audit on Homelessness. That is why we have revised the model to better reflect current needs, particularly in a time of rising inflation.

‘The rising cost of living is impacting all Ontarians but it is being felt most by our vulnerable groups, especially those who are at risk of homelessness. This new funding builds on the government’s investment of nearly \$4.4 billion over the past three years and it is to grow and enhance our community and supportive housing and address homelessness for vulnerable people, which includes \$1.2 billion to service managers and Indigenous program administrators through the social services relief fund. This is one huge step

forward in tackling Ontario's housing supply crisis and I am proud of how our government continues to take bold action.?

The announcement was welcomed warmly by Wayne Emmerson, Chair of the Regional Municipality of York, who said that as one of Canada's fastest-growing and most diverse urban municipalities, the needs will continue to grow along with the population.

?Across York Region, rapidly rising housing costs, lack of affordable housing supply, and a need for support services focused on preventing and addressing homelessness and mental health are increasing. We know that housing is a fundamental need, yet no one entity alone can solve this crisis. All levels of government, in partnership with developers, community organizations, have a role to play in addressing our complex housing affordable challenges. The health and wellbeing of residents remains a top priority for Regional Council which is why we have taken action to address this pressing issue.

?Through our 2023-2026 multiyear budget, Regional Council has committed \$12.8 million annually over the next four years to further support residents impacted by homelessness, mental health and housing. This funding supports the strategic priorities of Regional Council and will help us meet the outcomes identified in the Region's 10-year Housing Plan going forward?. This funding will help support some of our most vulnerable residents in accessing supportive housing and homelessness prevention service while also addressing gaps within the system of community supports.?

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