

Council Memo



To	City Council
Service Area	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Date	Tuesday, September 12, 2023
Subject	Council Memo – Stakeholder Commentary

On Thursday, September 7, 2023 staff hosted a drop-in session for stakeholders engaged through this process to provide additional commentary following the release of the final report. This memo captures key themes of those discussions.

Overarching themes:

- It's important to recognize that there is a lot of data, and the system is very complicated. A limitation of this report is the limited scope and the challenge of compiling and analyzing data in a comprehensive way to make recommendations under the tight timelines that were given. Additionally, the focused scope of the project made it difficult for some service providers to provide answers in their full context of service delivery outside the scope of inquiry. One example of this is services for youth which were outside of the scope.
- As we look at governance going forward, stakeholders commented that this report can be a catalyst to doing things differently/better in a future state. There were general comments about the need for an overarching community vision and action plan, linked to service design and coordinated advocacy strategy vs addressing needs and gaps in a one-off approach.
- Lastly, it was noted that upstream prevention was out of scope for this report, but is critical to addressing the root causes of homelessness, mental health and substance use issues.

Comments related to specific recommendations:

System Recommendation 2: Council requests that the Government of Ontario develop and adopt a provincial housing strategy with measurable targets and sufficient funds for ending homelessness and ensuring access of all Ontarians, including those of limited income, to housing of an adequate standard without discrimination. It should also take into consideration the needs of Indigenous people, LGBTQ2S+ people, people with disabilities including mental illness, women experiencing domestic violence, lone parents, immigrants and newcomers, and people living in poverty or with low incomes.

- With respect to the above recommendation, it was noted that subject matter experts need to provide more specifics. Additionally, with all requests of other levels of government, there were questions about the contingency plans if calls to action are not met.

System Recommendation 3: Council requests that the Guelph Wellington Ontario Health Team work with the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination to: a. plan for the integration of health services in the housing sector (wraparound supports) b. address the community need for permanent supportive housing. This planning should include City, County and Ontario Health West representation and be aligned with provincial direction and/or strategy.

- Stakeholders were supportive of a leading role for the Ontario Health Team (OHT) given their mandate from the Province, and noted the need for clear governance and accountability.
- There are concerns about the capacity of the Poverty Taskforce and other stakeholders, but it is recognized that the expertise of these groups need to be included in some form.

System Recommendation 4: Council requests the County of Wellington, in collaboration with local municipalities and local health organizations, jointly advocate to the Ministry of Health to provide accessible base funding to support wraparound health supports on the left side of the housing continuum.

- This connects to the need for a broader community advocacy strategy that considers a variety of approaches and tactics.

System Recommendation 5: Council requests that the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Board of Health lead an ongoing, comprehensive outcome evaluation of the systems level approach to homelessness (housing, mental health and substance use focus), whether it be working with the Guelph Wellington Ontario Health Team or with the City and the County.

- Stakeholders noted this is an important and significant task (evaluation) if it is to be done well/thoughtfully.
- It requires resources in addition to what is currently available at Public Health. Additionally, more discussion is needed on the leadership role of Public Health in this work as recent provincial announcements have created some uncertainty around future roles and responsibilities of Public Health teams.

System Recommendation 6: Council requests that the Chamber of Commerce approach developers to donate land for housing needs and wraparound services on the left side of the housing continuum including, but not limited to, emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing and wellness hubs. The City must be prepared to facilitate the required approvals connected with these opportunities. This should directly connect with the local collaborative plans (see System Recommendation 3).

- Stakeholders noted this is more of a tactic that lives inside of a larger strategy (see system recommendation 3). There needs to be a structure for how to work with potential donors and integrate opportunities to meet identified needs.
- It was also suggested that this recommendation could dovetail with work underway to consider city strategic real estate work and also any available county lands.

Housing Recommendation 1: Council requests the following to establish clarity and accountability regarding the City and the County's role in the housing continuum:

- a. A review of the governance model of the County of Wellington's Social Services Committee.
- b. Updated service level agreements, with measurable outcomes, key performance indicators and clear expectations for reporting process and frequency.
- c. The City of Guelph should hire a dedicated role to support (a), (b), and the implementation of a human rights-based approach to housing (see System Recommendation 1). This role should be an active member of the County of Wellington's Community Advisory Board.
 - Stakeholders felt this was an important recommendation that could have significant positive impacts.

Health Services Recommendation 1: Council requests that City staff provide Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Waterloo Wellington with a letter of support for the funding application to the Ministry of Health for a regional alternate care destination clinic.

- It was noted that the City could do much more than provide a letter of support for a regional alternate care destination model, including connecting this recommendation to future conversations about strategic real estate.

Health Services Recommendation 2: Council requests that the Ministry of Health provide clarity on how all mental health services in Guelph are funded, including community-based services, hospital/residential services and public-private models of care, to determine if the funding model impacts equitable access to mental health services in Guelph.

- Stakeholders remarked this recommendation should be expanded to include substance use funding as well. There is chronic underfunding of the system noted throughout the report which needs action from other levels of government.

Health Services Recommendation 3: Council supports the Guelph Police Service (GPS) and CMHA Waterloo Wellington's second application to the Solicitor General for Here 24/7 & IMPACT funding. Council requests that GPS provide a copy of the written submission to City staff when it has been finalized so that staff may provide a letter of support on behalf of Council.

- As the community advances work on a regional alternate care destination model, the IMPACT funding request may evolve.

Health Services Recommendation 4: Council requests that the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy continue to address known substance use service barriers including, but not limited to, funding, access and waitlists, to improve substance use services available to vulnerable populations within Guelph.

- Substance use systems challenges are well highlighted in the recommendations, however chronic underfunding across the system needs to be highlighted.
- The distinction between mental health and substance use isn't as separate as this report may suggest.
- In the event it's unclear in the report, the role of the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy is more of advocacy/awareness vs service delivery.

Attachments

None.

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