



## Committee of the Whole Report

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**Report Number:** HH2022-003

**Meeting Date:** May 3, 2022

**Title:** **Supportive Housing Update**

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Kirstin Maxwell, CEO KLH Housing Corp.

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### **Recommendation(s):**

**That** Report HH2022-003, **Supportive Housing Update**, be received; and

**That** this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council.

**Department Head:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Financial/Legal/HR/Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chief Administrative Officer:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Background:**

As the provincially designated Municipal Service Manager for Housing, the City of Kawartha Lakes has the delegated responsibility for, and has committed to, preventing and ending chronic homelessness. Appropriate supports and housing options is the primary solution to ending homelessness for those with complex needs. Supportive housing is one of these options which combines access to affordable housing with individualized, flexible support services for people with complex needs related to physical disabilities or illness, mental health concerns, or substance misuse issues, for those recovering from chronic homelessness.

Supportive Housing is philosophically grounded in a Housing First approach. Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into Supportive Housing without first requiring individuals or families to demonstrate that they are 'worthy' of housing by requiring sobriety or addressing other personal issues like mental health concerns.

The City has been providing Supportive Housing for those recovering from homelessness since 2017. Prior to this date, there were no Supportive Housing options for those experiencing homelessness with complex needs.

Individuals access Supportive Housing through the City's homelessness By-Name Priority List (BNL). Those on the BNL are prioritized according to their level of need with City staff and community agencies trained in conducting the single required triage screening tool. Those with complex needs who are at highest-risk of death if not housed are prioritized into Supportive Housing.

In 2019 the City occupied the residential wing of 68 Lindsay Street North, which was the City's first purpose-built Supportive Housing building. The City contracts the intensive case management support services from a community agency partner. This contract supports both those in the Supportive Housing units at 68 Lindsay Street North, as well as various other KLH Housing Corp. units in Kawartha Lakes.

## **Rationale:**

Living without stable housing can drastically worsen health. Homelessness can exacerbate mental health concerns, increase substance misuse issues, and prevent chronic physical health conditions from being addressed. People with these and other

health issues often end up in crisis situations while living on the streets, in emergency shelter, correctional facilities or emergency rooms.

At the September 24, 2019 Council Meeting, Report HH2019-009, Housing First – Intensive Case Management, was received which included a research evaluation of the City’s first Housing First model. The evaluation demonstrated the increased stabilization that the individuals and families experienced, as well as a reduction in the use of emergency services, including police, ambulance and emergency room visits.

### **Supportive Housing programs in Kawartha Lakes and the County of Haliburton:**

- 24 one-bedroom units at 68 Lindsay Street North, Lindsay
- 30+ various units in KLH Housing Corp. units and private rental units in Kawartha Lakes
- 40+ various units in KLH Housing Corp. units and private rental units in the County of Haliburton

### **The need for change to the Supportive Housing program:**

Although all of the various Supportive Housing program units noted above are serving those with relatively high needs, those with the highest and most complex needs are only supported by some programs. The Supportive Housing program that houses those with the most complex needs has seen significant challenges over the past couple of years which has impacted the outcomes of those in the program.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020 resulted in communities throughout Canada changing aspects of service delivery and embarking on new initiatives to better meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness during a time where physical distancing, masks and hand hygiene became a necessity for all. The services available to support people experiencing housing instability and homelessness changed dramatically with many service access points closed, reduced hours, or very limited capacity.

For the Supportive Housing program at 68 Lindsay Street North (68 LSN) as well as some of the other scattered site Supportive Housing units, the revisions to service delivery further complicated the expected challenges. Unfortunately, the pandemic began during the first year of operations at 68 LSN. Beyond the regular tenancy challenges in any new housing project, the program was challenged with COVID

restrictions, fears of outbreaks, staff shortages as well as concerns regarding criminal activities and safety issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic also exacerbated existing system challenges. Within the criminal justice system, the pandemic created a greater backlog of court charges and more frequent releases into the community from correction facilities. The Province also imposed an eviction moratorium. This caused significant delay in Landlord and Tenant Board processes, delaying evictions due to serious illegal events for months and sometimes more than a year. The pandemic also increased the poisoned drug supply, drug overdoses, and drug misuse.

A review of the first two years of operation and lessons learned through the pandemic, both locally and provincially has provided the opportunity for a reset for the 68 LSN housing initiative: to re-examine the best support model to meet the needs of the local population experiencing homelessness, the enhanced involvement of KLH Housing staff and the installation of a new version of on-site supports for tenants.

### **Resetting the Supportive Housing program:**

Significant work has been underway to reset the Supportive Housing Program to increase the effectiveness of supports and achieve better outcomes for those with complex needs, including the following:

- Change building access systems to help manage unwanted guests
- Hire security services to help manage guests and support tenants
- Review of support services
- Legal review surrounding guest policies
- Consultation with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Health, Kawartha Lakes Ontario Health Team, and Ontario Health East
- Engagement with Org Code Consulting to support the program reset
- Change in contracted support service provider
- Exploration of alternative housing models
- Safety planning with Kawartha Lakes Police Service

With the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness increasing, the program intensity and frequency and duration of the sited-based supports was insufficient. Coupled with the congregation of those with the highest acuity, the Supportive Housing program was not reaching its goals.

The reset of the Supportive Housing program is foundationally focused around community collaboration. Not one agency or one specific type of support can alone support those with complex needs. We need a community approach to supporting the most vulnerable in our community.

As of May 1<sup>st</sup> the John Howard Society (JHS) of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton will be the lead contracted agency providing the on-site intensive case management supports. The original service contract was with Four Counties Addiction Services Team and expired April 30, 2022. The transition to JHS builds on the progress made since 2019, leveraging the successes and addressing the limitations.

In addition to the on-site supports offered by JHS, in-kind onsite supports have been committed by various other agencies such as the Community Health Centre and the Ross Memorial Hospital, among others. Exploration is currently underway in expanding additional services including, mental health services, primary care, addiction services etc.

In addition to these various wrap-around services, we look forward to seeing the individuals and families in the Supportive Housing program at 68 LSN have access to other enhanced on-site programming such as:

- Life skills development
- Trustee programs
- Pre-employment & vocational programs
- Medical & social supports
- Counselling services
- Peer support programs
- Community development programs/events

Lastly, we are waiting to receive approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) to change the housing model for new tenants. MMAH approval is necessary as the capital funding received to build the residential units at 68 LSN was intended for permanent housing covered under the *Residential Tenancies Act*. The tenants currently residing in the supportive housing units are leaseholders.

An alternate housing model called Transition in Place (TiP) may provide an opportunity to better support households and meet the goals of the program. New households

moving into the units under a TiP supportive housing program would be identified as “sub-letting” their units until they take over the lease of the unit independently. This housing model allows for a period of stabilization supports but until the tenant becomes the “leaseholder”, participation in supports is identified as an expectation of the housing program. The intensity, frequency and duration of the supports is individualized to meet the needs of the household and the duration of the supports can indeed continue past the tenant becoming the legal leaseholder of the unit. If MMAH support is not granted to support this alternative housing model, increased screening of new tenants will be necessary.

Regardless of the implementation of a new housing model, those with the most complex challenges require a supportive housing model with 24/7 on-site clinical supports. Recognizing that our community has many individuals requiring this level of support, ongoing advocacy and collaboration of community partners will continue to pursue increased opportunities and positive outcomes.

### **Alignment to Strategic Priorities:**

This report aligns with the Strategic Priority of an Exceptional Quality of Life, and specifically the goal of improving the health and well-being of residents.

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**Department Head: Rod Sutherland, Director, Human Services**