



**Subject:** Shelter During Extreme Cold Warnings

**Report Number:** CAO 19-17

Author: Ron Shaw, Interim CAO

Meeting Type: Council Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, December 9, 2019

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**Recommendation:**

**That Report CAO 19-17 be received;**

**AND THAT Council approve in principle a program to provide overnight emergency shelter during declared extreme cold warnings; and**

**THAT staff work with volunteer agencies to ensure that appropriate volunteers are available to manage the centres and report back to Council with costs and a proposed policy to provide authority, conditions and guidance on the operation of the emergency shelters.**

**Background:**

His Worship Stephen Molnar has established a mayor's task force to attempt to find strategies to address some of the most pressing needs of the homeless in Tillsonburg, especially as winter sets in.

Interest and participation has been strong. The task force enjoyed participation from the County of Oxford Human Services, Southwestern Public Health, the OPP, Fire, RCP and Building departments, the Salvation Army and Faith Presbyterian Church, among others.

Information was shared about both the need and the resources available in the community. Some of those resources identified to date are attached.

Oxford Community Services have some funding available to help with existing approved programs.

**Discussion:**

A number of strategies were discussed. In addition to what a number of community groups are already doing, an immediate need was identified for an overnight shelter during declared extreme cold warnings. Only two buildings in the Town were already zoned to allow what the zoning by-law describes as a "Special Needs Home". One is the hospital and the other is the Tillsonburg Community Centre. The volunteer groups

implored the City to look at ways to move forward and allow them and their volunteers to step in and help.

There are programs in place to have people placed in motel rooms; however, for one reason or another, this is not an option.

In response, RCP has prepared the following outline as a proposed response to a declared Extreme Cold Warning. The intent is to provide a space within the Tillsonburg Community Centre where the appropriate community agencies can mobilize to support a shelter. The approach minimizes the impact on any other use and user of the facility, while providing a barrier-free space with access to a kitchen.

The Tillsonburg Community Centre is able to provide space to act as an emergency shelter in the event that Southwestern Public Health issues an Extreme Cold Warning. The shelter would provide a place to house homeless persons overnight between the hours of 8pm and 8am. Southwestern Public Health issues cold weather alerts when Environment Canada forecasts an air temperature below -15°C or a wind chill below -20°C. Those most vulnerable to the effects of the cold include older adults, infants and young children, outdoor workers, those who like outdoor sports such as skiing and hiking, and homeless persons and others who do not have shelter, proper clothing or food.

In the event of an Extreme Cold Warning, the Town could provide space in the Rotary Room at the Community Centre. There is an accessible entrance directly to the room from outside and there is also access to a kitchen and accessible washrooms. The room has enough space for several cots to be assembled to provide sleeping quarters for homeless persons.

The Town would need to depend on adequate volunteers to run the program. The Town's involvement would be to provide the space, arrange security and clean the space for day use the next day.

There are already places people can go during the day to find warmth. The challenge is a night when space is not available and it is often the coldest.

**Consultation:**

Two meetings of the Task Force have taken place to date.

**Financial Impact/Funding Source:**

In order to activate an emergency shelter the Town of Tillsonburg would anticipate costs related to the following unplanned expenses:

- A minimum of one licensed security guard
- Post emergency shelter enhanced janitorial cleaning services

The Town would require the following support from community agencies and volunteers:

- Volunteer staffing of the emergency shelter overnight
- Cots with blankets
- Warm meals/snacks/water

Town staff will also be talking to the County with regard to what funding is available.

### **Community Strategic Plan (CSP) Linkage:**

1. Excellence in Local Government
  - ☒ Demonstrate strong leadership in Town initiatives
  - ☐ Streamline communication and effectively collaborate within local government
  - ☐ Demonstrate accountability
2. Economic Sustainability
  - ☐ Support new and existing businesses and provide a variety of employment opportunities
  - ☐ Provide diverse retail services in the downtown core
  - ☐ Provide appropriate education and training opportunities in line with Tillsonburg's economy
3. Demographic Balance
  - ☐ Make Tillsonburg an attractive place to live for youth and young professionals
  - ☐ Provide opportunities for families to thrive
  - ☐ Support the aging population and an active senior citizenship
4. Culture and Community
  - ☐ Promote Tillsonburg as a unique and welcoming community
  - ☐ Provide a variety of leisure and cultural opportunities to suit all interests
  - ☐ Improve mobility and promote environmentally sustainable living

### **Attachments:**

Appendix A – Christmas Hamper

Appendix B – Food Resources

