



Date 5 October 2012

City Council

To: Mayor Canfield & Members of Council

**Fr: Councillor Louis Roussin
Councillor Rory McMillan
Councillor Sharon Smith
Karen Brown**

Re: Homelessness and Behavioural Issues Task Force

Recommendation:

Whereas Council approved the establishment of a Task Force on Homelessness at its July 2012 Council Meeting to develop a community strategy to address homelessness and related issues in Kenora; and

Whereas it is recommended that the term homelessness be expanded to address related behavioural issues within Kenora; and

Whereas the City has now identified the members of this Task Force;

Now therefore, let it be resolved that Council hereby establishes an ad hoc Task Force on Homelessness and Behavioural Issues in Kenora; and

That Council hereby approves the appointment of the following individuals to this Task Force for a term not to extend beyond November 30, 2014:

1. **Councillor Louis Roussin**, Council Lead
Councillor Rory McMillan, Alternate
2. **Dave Lucas**
3. **Joan Schelske**
4. **Treaty #3 Representative**
5. **Jack Martin**
6. **Rob Dokuchie**
7. **Randy Seller**; and

That the City CAO be appointed as a staff resource to this Task Force; and further

That Council hereby directs the Task Force on Homelessness and Behavioural Issues to develop a draft Terms of Reference to be brought back to Council for final approval.

Background:

Homelessness and behavioural issues are not a new issue to Kenora. For decades now this area has struggled in dealing with not only homelessness, but transients and related behavioural issues, including issues related to substance abuse. City Council has lobbied the Province for years now for assistance in addressing the homelessness and shelter needs of Kenora.

In February 2011, the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) produced a position paper entitled "A Pan-Northern Ontario Inventory of Homelessness Problems and Practices". Section 4.1 of this document identified the following as the most common problems related to homelessness in Northern Ontario:

- Lower than average median household incomes
- Large land area
- Lack of public transportation
- Higher than average unemployment rates and high seasonal unemployment rates and lower than average labour market participation rates
- High and rising energy costs relative to other parts of the Province
- Extremely low housing vacancy rates
- Shortage of affordable and rent-geared-to-income housing
- Couch surfing homelessness
- Migratory homelessness
- Distinct Aboriginal homelessness issues
- Aboriginal homelessness in urban centres after leaving remote reserves
- Limited available support from family and friends (re migration of persons from rural to urban areas)
- Mental health issues
- Addictions issues
- Youth homelessness
- Lack of emergency shelters in rural areas; inadequate funding for emergency shelters and most funding is not annualized
- Long waiting lists for affordable housing
- Lack of awareness of homelessness in Northern communities
- Vulnerability of households on fixed incomes, especially among seniors-led households faced with higher energy costs and increasing property taxes

Specific information related to the Kenora Region can be located throughout this position paper. It has been attached for Council's reference (attachment #1).

Following the release of that position paper, a Homelessness Summit was held on June 12th and 13th, 2012, in North Bay, Ontario. A copy of the proceedings related to this summit has also been attached for Council's reference (attachment #2).

It is clear that Kenora is not alone in its struggles with these issues. The issues are prevalent throughout the North, and indeed the country as other municipalities struggle to put in place solutions. For example, the City of Calgary, and their 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, or the City of Thunder Bay, and their Managed Alcohol Program. These are different solutions for different municipalities, both working successfully as they move forward in addressing their related issues.

In addition to the list of problems identified by NOSDA in their position paper, this report also looks at some additional items that should become components of a larger discussion with regards to homelessness and its related issues. These items should form part of the mandate of a proposed task force working towards an eventual solution.

Task Force on Homelessness and Behavioural Issues

Earlier this year the Lake of the Woods Development Commission (LOWDC) brought forward a report to the July 2012 Standing Committee of Council meeting, which made the following recommendation:

That the City of Kenora establish a Task Force on Homelessness to develop a community strategy to address homelessness and related issues in Kenora, led by Mayor and Council.

A copy of this report has been attached for your reference (attachment #3). Its contents have not been reiterated here.

After some discussion at the Standing Committee level, the resolution was amended to reflect a task force that would function not directly under the leadership of Mayor and Council, but rather as an independent ad hoc task force with a Council representative. This task force would receive the full support of Mayor and Council for moving forward towards a proposed solution for these issues. As a result, the following resolution was passed at the July 2012 Council meeting:

That the City of Kenora establish a Task Force on Homelessness to develop a community strategy to address homelessness and related issues in Kenora; and

That the CAO be directed to provide Council with a report recommending the establishment of said task force, including proposed framework and membership, prior to the September 2012 Council meeting.

To show Council full Council support for this initiative, it is recommended that the Council appointment to this task force act in the capacity of Task Force Chair.

It is recognized in this report that the term "homelessness" is generally used as a more generic term, which ultimately means a broader spectrum of issues as outlined previously within this report. It has been the discussion of the writers of this report that, to effectively address the issues prevalent in Kenora, the name of the task force should include reference to "behavioural issues". A listing of disorderly behaviours responded to by the local OPP detachment over the course of the past year has been attached to this report for your information (attachment #4).

Consolidated Housing and Homelessness-Related Plan:

For years now, the City of Kenora, together with other Ontario municipalities, has been frustrated in dealing with multiple Provincial Ministries and Ministers with regards to the Homelessness and Related Issues. This issue was revisited under the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. One of the outcomes from that review was a commitment to a consolidation of the housing and homelessness programs. This shift is a core component of Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS), with the Provincial direction being "to transform the housing system and put people first".

Under this new direction, the Kenora District Services Board (KDSB) was given a mandate by the Province to build a consolidated housing and homelessness-related plan addressing related issues in each of the area municipalities. In discussions with Diane Apland, Director of Integrated Social Services at the KDSB, the KDSB is looking to area municipalities for their expertise and to take the lead in developing a consolidated plan for their individual municipality based on the issues and challenges experienced locally. The intent is to build solutions intended to address local issues for each municipality, recognizing that, while some of the issues are universal, each municipality may face unique issues and circumstances that also need to be addressed.

In August, at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Mario Sergio, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, provided City delegates with an overview of this Provincial direction. A copy of the correspondence sent by the Province to the KDSB on this matter, which includes additional information on the program consolidation, has been attached to this report for your reference (attachment #5).

Kenora Assembly of Resources (KAR) Programs

Over the past few years, the City has been reviewing the Kenora Assembly of Resources (KAR) programs provided on the Harbourfront. These programs are

provided under an agreement between KAR and the City to work with the marginalized, as well as the court diversion programs. This matter has been addressed under a separate report coming forward, also to the October standing committee meetings.

As part of the KAR review, the subject of homelessness, or more accurately, the local issues related to transients and behavioural issues, including substance abuse, has been a continuing part of the discussions.

These programs may be but one small part of an overall potential solution on these issues. As such, it is recommended that this matter be referred to the Task Force on Homelessness and Behavioural Issues for further review. In the interim, the existing contract with KAR is being recommended for a one year extension.

Task Force Structure and Membership

The issues of homelessness and behavioural issues are broad. A long term solution is needed, and difficult decisions / recommendations may need to be made as part of developing that solution. As agreed to in July, the writers of this report have met to recommend structure and membership back to Council for consideration. It is recommended that a small group, seven individuals, form the primary task force. This group should be empowered to develop subcommittees to address specific issues related to homelessness and behavioural issues.

The following membership is being recommended to ensure participation by a number of key individuals, groups and organizations:

1. **Louis Roussin**, Council Lead
Rory McMillan, Alternate
2. **Dave Lucas**
3. **Joan Schelske**
4. **Treaty #3 Representative**
5. **Jack Martin**
6. **Rob Dokuchie**
7. **Randy Seller**

The City CAO shall be assigned as a staff resource for this initiative.

Next Steps:

It is not the intent of this report to recommend a solution, nor even next steps, as that ultimately is the role of the proposed task force. Rather, it is recommended that the newly appointed Task Force members be directed to develop a draft terms of reference.

It must be recognized that there are a myriad of groups and organizations all working on different facets of the larger homelessness and related behavioural issues overall vision within Kenora. Ultimately, it will be a key priority for this task force to understand the existing partners, including the available services and their current relationships in order to move forward effectively.

Budget:

Initially, there will be no budget impact related to the establishment of this task force, other than commitment of City staff time. As the work of that task force progresses, there may be a need to address budget requests, which will be done at that time. There should be an eventual and long term reduction in overall costs related to homelessness and related issues, including behavioural issues and substance abuse. This cannot be quantified at this time, and the potential savings are broader than that which will be experienced strictly at the municipal level.

Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements:

Notification will be sent to each individual being requested to participate on this task force. Future communications will be sent following initial meetings by that task force. Regular communication with regards to progress of the task force will be made at the Council table by the Chair of that committee.