



**Report:** CSD-HOU-17-14

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Community Services**  
**Housing Services**

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**To:** Chair Geoff Lorentz and Members of the Community Services Committee

**Date:** June 20, 2017

**File Code:** S13-40

**Subject:** 2016/17 Housing Stability Data Summary Report

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**Recommendation:**

For information

**Summary:**

The Region of Waterloo Housing Services has produced the 2016/17 Housing Stability Data Summary to inform the community of current trends in housing and homelessness in Waterloo Region. The Data Summary (attached as Appendix A) includes information for the last three years on emergency shelter use, income, rental housing affordability and availability, and statistics related to the coordinated access to housing supports waiting list. This Council Report provides some background information, a brief analysis of trends and statistics presented in the two-page Data Summary, along with next steps.

**Report:**

**1.0 Background**

The Housing Stability Data Summary about homelessness and rental housing for Waterloo Region has been produced annually since 2008. It was initially produced by the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG) as part of an annual report card. With changes in HHUG funding and focus, Waterloo Region Housing Services assumed the responsibility to continue to produce an annual data summary beginning in 2013. The reports are produced to align, where possible, with fiscal year funding and agreement cycles (April 1 to March 31).

**2.0 Data Summary Report**

The 2016/17 Housing Stability Data Summary (Data Summary) is attached as Appendix 2423757

A. This report captures key indicators related to housing and homelessness in Waterloo Region over the past three years. Changes in data from 2015/16 and 2016/17 are highlighted.

The report includes data in five key areas related to finding and keeping housing: emergency shelter; income; rental housing; community housing; and the coordinated access to housing supports waiting list.

### **Emergency Shelter**

The emergency shelter system experienced some significant changes including a new funding model in 2013 with the implementation of the provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and most recently the implementation of a new Emergency Shelter Framework in 2017 (CSD-HOU-17-07).

Emergency shelter data in 2014/15 included information not only from the six Region funded emergency shelters but also from Kitchener-Waterloo Out of the Cold (OOTC) sites and the temporary YWCA Transitional Shelter. Emergency Shelter data for 2015/16 and 2016/17 includes only the six, year-round Region funded emergency shelters and can be found on the [Region's website](#). The new pilot 'Bunkies' shelter at The Working Centre began in March of 2017 and the three people served over that month are included in the 2016/17 data.

Highlights comparing shelter use data over the past two years are included below. Some areas have increased while others have decreased. The reason for these data changes from year to year is sometimes unclear. Where information is available to help understand the changes, it has been included.

- **Numbers Overall and Length of Stay** - The overall number of bed nights increased very slightly (<1%), while the number of individuals accessing shelter decreased by five per cent (2,878 to 2,726). Average length of stay for singles increased by one day (from 28 to 29 days) and for families increased by 7 days (from 36 to 43 days).
- **Chronic and Episodic Homelessness** - The vast majority of people (91 per cent) accessed emergency shelter for a short stay. The remaining nine per cent of people were experiencing episodic or chronic homelessness. The number of people experiencing episodic homelessness (defined as three or more shelter stays in a twelve-month period, with each shelter stay period separated by 30 or more days) increased by four per cent (from 178 to 186). The number of people experiencing chronic homelessness (defined as accessing shelter for more than 180 days in one year) increased by 10 per cent (from 61 to 67). Despite the increase in chronic and episodic homelessness, the percentage of people accessing shelter for the first time remained the same at 51 per cent while those

returning within the year increased by only 1 per cent in 2016/17 (from 27% to 28%).

- **Demographic Trends** - Changes in demographic trends and household types are highlighted below:
  - Unaccompanied youth ages 16-24 accessing shelter dropped by 22% (from 776 to 607 people). This can largely be attributed to diversion and family reconnection efforts by youth shelters.
  - Older adults ages 65+ accessing shelter increased by 33% (from 45 to 60 people). The number of older adults in shelter has fluctuated over the last five years ranging from 46 to 53 people, with 60 in 2016/2017 being the highest to date. The reason for this change is unknown.
  - The number of families accessing shelter increased by 20 per cent (from 108 families to 130 families). Although diversion was attempted for these families for a variety of reasons it was not possible to avoid a shelter stay. Dependents in families decreased by 6 per cent indicating smaller families.
  - There was a one per cent increase in First Nations/Metis/Inuit peoples accessing shelter (from 299 to 303 people).
  - There was a 150 per cent increase in the number of refugee claimants who accessed shelter last year compared to the previous year (from 18 to 45 people). This is consistent with the recent influx of refugee claimants coming to Canada due to social and political change in the US. Refugee claimants are in the process of being considered for refugee status after either crossing a port of entry and making a refugee claim to Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), or otherwise entering the country and making an inland claim to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).
  - In contrast to the increase in refugee claimants, there was a decrease of 26 per cent in the number of immigrants and permanent residents accessing shelter (from 146 to 108). The reason for this change is unknown.
  - There was a 10 per cent decrease in the number of veterans (any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training and is honourably discharged) accessing shelter (from 30 to 27 people).

### **Income**

The Data Summary (Appendix A) provides information on income up until March 2017 (where any changes after that time will be captured in next year's report). This data shows that while incomes have increased slightly, they remain inadequate to afford even a bachelor apartment at average market rent.

Low social assistance rates continue to exacerbate housing barriers for people. While basic needs allowance increased by eight per cent for singles receiving Ontario Works

(OW) (from \$305 to \$330) and by two per cent for singles receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) (from \$631 to 649), the monthly shelter allowance has remained unchanged over the past five years (\$376 for OW and \$479 for ODSP). A bachelor apartment (at an average cost of \$710 in 2016/17) remains impossible to afford using the shelter portion of the OW or ODSP allowances.

Although Ontario's minimum wage increased from \$11.25 to \$11.40 (1.3%) over 2016/17, the minimum housing wage (the minimum amount of earned hourly income needed to afford a unit at average market rent) increased between one and 28 per cent (depending on the number of bedrooms). For example, minimum housing wage shows that a person earning \$11.40 minimum wage cannot afford a bachelor apartment (which requires hourly earnings of \$13.65). Adequate housing in Waterloo Region continues to be out of reach for people earning minimum wage.

### **Rental Housing**

The Data Summary (Appendix A) provides information on the number and cost of private market rental units, and number of units and wait times for Community Housing.

The rental housing data comes from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The net number of private market rental units available in Waterloo Region (excluding purpose built student housing) increased by four per cent over the previous year (an additional 1,412 units). However, the vacancy rate declined slightly (0.2%) from 2.4 to 2.2 per cent in 2016 which remains below what housing researchers indicate is a 'healthy rate' of three per cent. The cost of private market rentals continues to increase year over year (between one to five per cent depending on the number of bedrooms) with a large increase of 28 per cent in the rental cost for a three bedroom unit. This large increase can be attributed to the spike in rental costs in the Waterloo market (the Cambridge and Kitchener market for three plus bedrooms increased within the expected range of around five per cent).

The number of completed Community Housing rental units increased by 7 (or 0.07%) in 2016/17. The number of households on the Community Housing Waitlist for 2016/17 is a point-in-time snapshot showing a 14 per cent increase over the previous year (from 3,004 to 3,432). This increase is partly due to the number of Community Housing applications submitted by Syrian refugee families in 2016 (who arrived in Waterloo Region in 2015). While the number of households on the wait list does fluctuate from year to year, the number has hovered around 3,000 for the last decade. Average wait times for Community Housing have not changed over the past year (with bachelor and one bedroom units remaining at 6+ years for non-seniors, families requiring two or more bedrooms remaining at 3+ years, and seniors remaining at 2+ years).

### **Supportive Housing**

Prioritized Access to Housing Support (PATHS) is the coordinated waiting list process for Region funded supportive housing (STEP Home and CHPI Supportive Housing). PATHS is a prioritized waiting list for those experiencing homelessness with high acuity (priority is determined by client strengths, depth of need, and housing barriers) rather than who has been on the list the longest (first come, first served). See the [Supportive Housing Brochure](#) for more information

The number housed from the PATHS list increased by 20 per cent (from 96 in 2015/16 to 115 in 2016/2017). Despite these housing efforts, as of March 31, 2017, a total of 243 people remained on the PATHS list waiting for supportive housing, compared to 125 the previous year. This increase reflects a more accurate number of people experiencing homelessness with high acuity in Waterloo Region. Over the fall of 2016, it became clear that a number of shelter participants were not captured on the PATHS list. Over the winter of 2016/17, the Region funded an Intensive Shelter Worker in four emergency shelters to support a more focused effort in connecting shelter participants to the PATHS list to be prioritized for supported housing.

People continue to be added and removed from the PATHS list on a daily basis<sup>1</sup>. The PATHS priority list is the tool our community is using to measure homelessness inflow and outflow on our journey towards ending chronic and persistent homelessness in Waterloo Region<sup>2</sup>. The goal is to begin a downward trend towards functionally ending homelessness (for a short video from the US explaining “functionally ending homelessness” see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O8mEwbF0ps>). For further information on PATHS see the Waterloo Region 20,000 Homes Progress Report (CSD-HOU-17-16) also on the June 20, 2017 Community Services Committee agenda.

### 3.0 Next Steps

The 2016/17 Data Summary (Appendix A) supports community planning efforts and provides information used by the Region and many agencies and groups for community education. The Data Summary will be made available on the website for the Region of Waterloo and the Homelessness Hub national clearinghouse at [www.homelesshub.ca](http://www.homelesshub.ca). In addition, the Data Summary will be distributed through the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG) list serve and hard copies will be distributed to community agencies for their use and further distribution. The Data Summary serves as a component of the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan update to the community (CSD-HOU-17-13) also on the June 20, 2017 Community Services Committee agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> People are added to the list when eligible and are removed once they have moved into housing, have moved out of town, lost contact for 90 days or longer, or passed away.

<sup>2</sup> Ending chronic homelessness by 2025 is one of the priorities identified by the Province in their 2016 update of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

**Corporate Strategic Plan:**

Working to strengthen the housing stability system and build the community's capacity to address issues of housing instability and homelessness is consistent with the Region of Waterloo 2015-2018 Corporate Strategic Plan, Focus Area 4: Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities; and specifically, Strategic Objective 4.3.1 to "Implement the Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy" and Strategic Objective 4.3 Increase the supply and range of affordable and supportive housing options.

**Financial Implications:**

Nil

**Other Department Consultations/Concurrence:**

Nil

**Attachments**

Appendix A: 2016/17 Housing Stability Data Summary

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**APPENDIX A  
2016/17 Housing Stability Data Summary**

## Housing Stability Data Summary 2016/2017



Region of Waterloo

For more info visit:

Region of Waterloo:  
[communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca](http://communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca)  
(search "housing stability data summary")

Homelessness & Housing  
Umbrella Group:  
[www.hhug.ca](http://www.hhug.ca)

Homeless Hub:  
[www.homelesshub.ca](http://www.homelesshub.ca)

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This Housing Stability Data Summary captures key indicators related to housing and homelessness in Waterloo Region. The data is organized into five areas including: 1) emergency shelter, 2) income, 3) rental housing, 4) community housing, and 5) supportive housing. Changes between 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 are shown in the final column.

| Demand for Emergency Shelter | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | Change Since Last Year |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Number of beds nights        | 74,447    | 78,678    | 78,787    | +0.1%                  |
| Number of people who stayed  | 3,219     | 2,878     | 2,726     | -5%                    |

| Demographic Trends in Emergency Shelter | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | Change Since Last Year |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Men                                     | 67%       | 66%       | 69%       | +3%                    |
| Women                                   | 32%       | 33%       | 31%       | -2%                    |
| Other gender identity                   | 0.4%      | 0.5%      | 1%        | +0.5%                  |
| Families                                | 112       | 108       | 130       | +20%                   |
| Dependents ages 0-15                    | 186       | 220       | 204       | -7%                    |
| All dependents                          | 201       | 262       | 246       | -6%                    |
| Unaccompanied youth(16-24)              | 826       | 776       | 607       | -22%                   |
| Adults (ages 25-64)                     | 1,694     | 1,722     | 1,682     | -2%                    |
| Older adults (ages 65+)                 | 53        | 45        | 60        | +33%                   |
| First Nations/Metis/Inuit               | 286       | 299       | 303       | +1%                    |
| Immigrants/Permanent Res.               | 147       | 146       | 108       | -26%                   |
| Refugees                                | 5         | 6         | 9         | +50%                   |
| Refugee claimants                       | 17        | 18        | 45        | +150%                  |
| Veterans                                | 21        | 30        | 27        | -10%                   |

| Emergency Shelter Stay Trends      | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | Change Since Last Year |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Episodic homelessness <sup>1</sup> | 182       | 178       | 186       | +4%                    |
| Chronic homelessness <sup>2</sup>  | 43        | 61        | 67        | +10%                   |
| Singles' length of stay (avg.)     | 25 days   | 28 days   | 29 days   | +4%                    |
| Families' length of stay (avg.)    | 23 days   | 36 days   | 43 days   | +19%                   |
| First time in emergency shelter    | 48%       | 51%       | 51%       | 0%                     |
| Returning within the year          | 25%       | 27%       | 28%       | +1%                    |

<sup>1</sup> Chronic homelessness refers to people with shelter stays of 180 days or more (cumulative) in the past year.

<sup>2</sup> Episodic homelessness refers to people with three or more shelter intakes 30 days apart in the past year.

| Income   | 2014/<br>2015 | 2015/<br>2016 | 2016/<br>2017 | Change<br>Since Last<br>Year |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| Ontario Works (OW) allowance for single person:                        | \$656         | \$681         | \$706         | +4%                          |
| Basic allowance portion <sup>3</sup>                                   | \$280         | \$305         | \$330         | +8%                          |
| Shelter allowance portion <sup>4</sup>                                 | \$376         | \$376         | \$376         | 0%                           |
| Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) allowance for single person: | \$1,098       | \$1,110       | \$1,128       | +2%                          |
| Basic allowance portion <sup>3</sup>                                   | \$619         | \$631         | \$649         | +3%                          |
| Shelter allowance portion <sup>4</sup>                                 | \$479         | \$479         | \$479         | 0%                           |
| Minimum wage (hourly)  | \$11.00       | \$11.25       | \$11.40       | +1%                          |
| Average hourly wage needed to afford rent for a bachelor               | \$12.83       | \$13.54       | \$13.65       | +1%                          |
| Average hourly wage needed to afford rent for a one bedroom            | \$15.67       | \$16.35       | \$16.77       | +3%                          |
| Average hourly wage needed to afford rent for a two bedrooms           | \$18.75       | \$19.17       | \$20.19       | +5%                          |
| Average hourly wage needed to afford rent for three or more bedrooms   | \$21.27       | \$22.19       | \$28.46       | +28%                         |
| Rental Housing <sup>5</sup>  | 2014/<br>2015 | 2015/<br>2016 | 2016/<br>2017 | Change<br>Since Last<br>Year |
| Average monthly market rent for a bachelor                             | \$667         | \$704         | \$710         | +1%                          |
| Average monthly market rent for a one bedroom                          | \$815         | \$850         | \$872         | +3%                          |
| Average monthly market rent for two bedrooms                           | \$975         | \$997         | \$1,050       | +5%                          |
| Average monthly market rent for three or more bedrooms                 | \$1,106       | \$1,154       | \$1,480       | +28%                         |
| Vacancy rate for private market rent units                             | 2.3%          | 2.4%          | 2.2%          | -0.2%                        |
| Private market rent units  | 31,680        | 32,334        | 33,746        | +4%                          |
| Community Housing <sup>5</sup>   | 2014/<br>2015 | 2015/<br>2016 | 2016/<br>2017 | Change<br>Since Last<br>Year |
| Capacity (number of units)   | 10,381        | 10,403        | 10,410        | +0.7%                        |
| Waiting list (number of households)                                    | 2,962         | 3,004         | 3,432         | +14%                         |
| Waiting time for seniors   | 2+ years      | 2+ years      | 2+ years      | 0%                           |
| Waiting time for non-seniors (bachelor/1 bedroom)                      | 6+ years      | 6+ years      | 6+ years      | 0%                           |
| Waiting time for small families (2-3 bedrooms)                         | 3+ years      | 3+ years      | 3+ years      | 0%                           |
| Waiting time for large families (4-5 bedrooms)                         | 3+ years      | 3+ years      | 3+ years      | 0%                           |
| Supportive Housing   | 2014/<br>2015 | 2015/<br>2016 | 2016/<br>2017 | Change<br>Since Last<br>Year |
| Housed from PATHS <sup>6</sup>   | N/A           | 96            | 115           | +20%                         |
| Remaining on PATHS (as of March 31, 2017)                              | N/A           | 125           | 243           | +94%                         |

<sup>3</sup> Basic allowance is for all other personal costs (e.g., food, toiletries, transportation, and telephone).

<sup>4</sup> Shelter allowance is the amount provided to cover rent, utilities and tenant insurance.

<sup>5</sup> These figures represent point in time information provided in December in each year.

<sup>6</sup> Prioritized Access to Housing Support (PATHS) is the coordinated waiting list for supportive housing programs funded through the Region of Waterloo.