

## **County and partners continuing with coordinated response to encampments on municipal property**

**Cobourg, ON – August 25, 2023** – Northumberland County continues to work with community partners to ensure a coordinated response to unauthorized encampment on municipal property in the Town of Cobourg.

On Wednesday this week, County staff were alerted to an unauthorized encampment set up at its 600 William Street, Cobourg property. As with the Cobourg West Pier encampment, which has now been vacated, outreach workers have connected with the approximately 10 to 15 individuals at 600 William Street to advise that camping and loitering are not permitted at this location. They are continuing conversations to support a transition to community services.

“Not everyone locates at an encampment for the same reasons,” states Community and Social Services Director Lisa Horne. “Some individuals may need housing but face affordability challenges. Some may have health challenges that impact their ability to retain housing. Some may have housing but feel isolated, and so gravitate to encampments. We also recognize that people tenting in encampments are more likely to be impacted by historical and ongoing trauma.

“In each case, we are dealing with the unique needs of the individual and charting a pathway out of encampment by supporting engagement with services that best address those needs.”

On Monday, the Town of Cobourg Municipal Council passed a by-law authorizing the County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to exempt certain activities such as encampment from permitting requirements under the Town’s Parks Use By-law, during an emergency. Northumberland County is now reviewing a draft of the by-law, and will work with legal counsel to assess its implications for operations once a final approved version is released by the Town. At this time, County CAO Jennifer Moore has not accepted any authority delegated within the by-law, and the County has taken no action with respect to the by-law.

Outreach workers from Northumberland County Community & Social Services, Northumberland Hills Hospital Community Mental Health Services, and Transition House Shelter are meeting regularly with individuals who are tenting at 600 William Street. They are listening to understand each person’s unique needs, and making offers of service such as emergency shelter, Help Centre support with current rental listings, social assistance registration, health, mental health and addictions support, food supports, and other essential services, depending on individual needs.

“Accessing community services is voluntary, and our goal continues to be voluntary resolution of this encampment through compassionate and responsive offers of service,” states CAO Jennifer Moore.

“At the same time, 600 William Street is an active municipal services facility. It is home to operations such as the Northumberland Paramedics’ Cobourg base, Land Use Planning and Inspections permitting, Corporate Communications, and the Business and Entrepreneurship Centre for small business supports. It is vital that these services continue uninterrupted for our community, and that our team members feel safe in performing their duties.

“We have taken steps with our security partners and facilities staff to ensure business continuity, staff, and visitor safety. As work continues to support those tenting to transition to community services, I want to assure the public that essential municipal services will also continue.”