

Update on progress to modernize shelter services at 310 Division Street, Cobourg

Cobourg, ON - June 18, 2024 - Progress continues on the renovations and service plans to relocate and modernize homeless shelter services at 310 Division Street, Cobourg. The County, in partnership with Transition House Coalition, continues to expedite work to open this facility by early fall with the goal of better serving those who are unhoused in our community.

While plans were initially set for the shelter to be operational by spring, reconstruction work was paused while County Council considered public feedback on ownership structures for the facility. One of the recommendations emerging from the community engagement phase of planning for 310 Division Street was that alternative models for ownership of the property be explored as part of asset management and accountability measures included in the final agreement between the County and Transition House.

Following legal review and negotiation with Transition House, an updated Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by both organizations whereby the County will retain ownership of the property, while Transition House continues as the service provider.

"From the beginning of this undertaking, the goal has been to embed community input into decision-making processes about this transition, to support positive integration of shelter services within the neighbourhood and the broader community," states Warden Brian Ostrander. "We heard that this step was important to the community, and both Transition House and the County sought to honour this feedback."

The Warden continues: "With ownership arrangements finalized, and accountability for renovations now confirmed, the County is taking all possible actions to expedite the necessary work to make this facility accessible to people living unsheltered in our community as soon as possible. Architectural plans are nearing completion, including electrical and mechanical engineering review and design, with permits being finalized for submission. As soon as permits are issued, interior reconstruction work will begin. We are on track for a September opening."

With the current shelter at 10 Chapel Street, Cobourg, no longer meeting community need, relocation to 310 Division Street will enable modernized shelter services ranging from warming/cooling drop-in space to private shelter accommodations to transitional housing, along with collaborative partnerships with service providers for onsite wrap-around supports. While reconstruction work was paused, teams have nevertheless been advancing architectural plans and permitting, along with activities such as:

- Landscaping for the exterior of the facility
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design assessments and upgrades
- Installation of security systems
- Assessment and upgrades to the fire suppression system
- Electrical upgrades on lighting and outlets
- IT assessments for phone and internet connectivity

As further action, Northumberland County continues to collaborate with the Town of Cobourg towards finalizing an agreement supporting the relocation and modernization of homeless shelter services to this new facility. This partnership is a critical step forward in addressing the urgent need for comprehensive homelessness services in our community.

In a recent meeting between the Heads of Councils and CAOs for both organizations, final terms of an agreement were identified for consideration by both councils. The agreement will outline key

operational standards to ensure the new shelter meets the needs of vulnerable populations while addressing community concerns. Notable terms include:

- 24/7 onsite security at the shelter.
- Establishment of a Community Liaison Committee for the shelter.

Additionally, the agreement will incorporate current practices of Transition House, such as:

- A code of conduct for shelter clients.
- A 24/7 dedicated phone line to respond to inquiries from agency partners/members of the public.
- Continued communication that a low-barrier shelter is not a no-barrier shelter.
- Confirmation that the shelter will not house a safe injection site.

Both County and Town councils will review the terms of a final agreement and vote on its adoption in upcoming meetings.

"As demonstrated throughout our history, Northumberland County and the Town of Cobourg continue to collaborate to achieve workable solutions to opportunities and challenges facing our community," states County Warden Brian Ostrander. "County Council looks forward to discussing the terms of this agreement at our meeting on June 19th, and seeing meaningful progress at the facility throughout the summer months, towards a September opening."

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