

Peel forms community-wide alliance to end homelessness

A collaboration of Peel organizations focused on ending homelessness has joined together to create the Peel Alliance to End Homelessness, following the release of results from a week-long registry of individuals experiencing homelessness in Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga.

The research was led by United Way of Peel Region, the Region of Peel, Salvation Army, Our Place Peel, Supportive Housing in Peel, St. Leonard's Place Peel, Salvation Army and the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, who have been working together under the banner of 20,000 Homes Peel. The group released the findings of the registry at a gathering of peers called A Call to Action.

The registry uncovered disturbing information about the current challenges vulnerable citizens face in accessing and keeping stable housing. Key highlights of the results included:

? In the last six months, respondents reported accessing an emergency room 711 times,

? 149 respondents reported having mental health challenges,

? 105 respondents were physically assaulted while homeless.

The committee will further analyze the data and produce a report to be released this fall.

From June 6 to 8, a survey was conducted by more than 100 community volunteers and professional staff who visited locations throughout Peel to identify individuals experiencing homelessness. This was the first time Peel joined other Canadian cities that have conducted registries of homeless citizens in several years.

While the objective of the registry is to provide a snapshot of homelessness in the region, the greater goal is to help connect individuals and families to stable housing and support services.

Following release of the registry's results, participants in the 20,000 Homes Peel Initiative agreed to continue their work under the umbrella of a new organization: the Peel Alliance to End Homelessness.

?We believe in mobilizing leaders from all walks of life to work together to create real change,? observed United Way of Peel Region President and CEO?Shelley White. ?We see a great example of that here today. The results from this milestone initiative will allow all of us to continue to work with our community and government partners to ensure every man, woman and child in our community has a warm place to sleep.?

?The work we have done and will do helps build the case for getting people into stable housing where they can care for themselves more effectively ? on their own or with support; heal their minds, bodies, and spirits; and renew themselves,? Peel's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Eileen de Villa commented. ?There is significant evidence ? locally and globally ? that by doing so other costs will be reduced, possibly balancing the fiscal scales.?