

DSB homelessness enumeration to include two Island communities

Tom Sasvari

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ESPANOLA—In a provincial effort to end chronic homelessness by 2025 and beyond, agencies like the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (MSDSB) is carrying out an enumeration of those experiencing homelessness in their communities. The enumeration will include two municipalities on Manitoulin Island.

“We are holding a homeless enumeration April 16-22 in our district,” said MS DSB CAO Fern Dominelli, after a DSB board meeting last week. He pointed out the province effort is to end chronic homelessness by 2025 and the long-term goal is to end homelessness in all forms.

“An enumeration will take place in several communities in our area, including two on Manitoulin, to count those who are homeless or termed couch surfers,” said Mr. Dominelli. Donna Stewart, Director of Integrated Social Services with DSB informed the board that as part of the province’s efforts to end chronic homelessness by 2025 and the long-term goal to end homelessness, Service Managers are required to conduct local enumeration of people experiencing homelessness. The province requires all service managers to conduct enumeration of those experiencing homelessness in their communities. Local homeless enumeration, which is the measurement of the number of people experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time, would help Service Managers and the ministry better understand the scale and nature of homelessness across the province, as well as inform current and future policy and program design.

Recognizing the value of strong, reliable and consistent data to inform policy, programs and services at both the provincial and service manager levels, the objectives of local homeless enumeration are: to provide a snapshot of homelessness, including information on the scope and nature of homelessness in communities across Ontario; to provide a mechanism for tracking progress and trends, including: establishing a baseline sample that can be used to track progress in reducing homelessness and chronic homelessness over time; enabling provincial reporting on the problem of homelessness; providing data that Service Managers can use to monitor the impact of local strategies and initiatives; to provide information to drive change, spur innovation and enable continuous improvement. Data gathered through enumeration can provide information about whether programs and initiatives are having the desired impact on homelessness.

To effectively do this work the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB required specialized services to assist the organization with completion of this task. In May 2017, the board approved a report to issue a request for proposals to seek eligible proponents to complete the Homelessness Enumeration.

Carol Kauppi who is a director, Centre for Research in Social Justice and Policy and for the Poverty, Homelessness and Migration from Laurentian University was the successful proponent of the RFP process, explained Ms. Stewart.

The MSDSB staff and Ms. Kauppi have determined that the method used to conduct the enumeration will be a Period Prevalence Count (PPC) Method. Period Prevalence count involves a coordinated, multi-day count of homeless persons and accesses them through a variety of service organizations that are likely to be used by persons experiencing homelessness.

The area enumerated was based on the vastness of the catchment to ensure that the area as a whole was well represented. Particular interest was paid to areas containing a shelter and/or foodbank to assist in provision of wholesome data.

The communities enumerated include Espanola, Little Current, Chapleau, Noelville, Mindemoya, Markstay and Foleyet.

Using the internet, telephone directories and the networks of identified service providers, a list of services has been produced and a preliminary list of providers has been developed. It will be expanded to ensure that all organizations in the study areas will be invited to participate. A letter explaining the objectives of the study and the need for participation for all providers was delivered to the agencies. All providers who showed an interest to participate have been contacted by telephone in order to set a date and time for a meeting to review the information to be collected in the study and to determine how the data can be collected from that agency. In Little Current the enumeration will take place from April 16-20, 2018 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the DSB office, the Little Current Curling club from April 16-22, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; the Little Current Hospital April 16-22, from 8:30 am. to 7:00 p.m. and the Little Current Family Health Team (to be determined).

In Mindemoya the enumeration will take place at Manitoulin Family Resources (MFR) April 17, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; Mindemoya Food Bank from April 17-20, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; the Mindemoya Thrift Shop from April 17-21, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and April 18 from 7:00 p.m to 9:00 p.m; Mindemoya Hospital from April 16-22 from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and the Mindemoya Family Health Team from April 16-20 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Data will be collected from people experiencing forms of homelessness and hidden homelessness using a structured questionnaire to gather information from them regarding forms of homelessness. The results of the enumeration will be carefully analyzed to determine the impact on the current Housing and Homeless Plan. Once the results are analyzed, the Plan will be weighed on the potential impact on ending chronic homelessness, and determinations made on where effected changes could better impact results.