

**MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON WOMEN'S SHELTER NEEDS
INTERIM REPORT**

The Mayor's Task Force on Women's Shelter Needs recommends that the following report be received for information.

Economic Impact

N/A

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the work to date of the Mayor's Task Force on Women's Shelter Needs.

Background and Analysis

The Mayor's Task Force on Women's Shelter Needs was approved by Council on June 26, 2006, to investigate whether the need for shelter on the part of the women of Vaughan is currently being met, and if not, to outline a strategy for developing such a facility, either independently or in conjunction with current shelter providers in York Region. Such a strategy was to include but not be limited to issues such as capital and operational costs, sources of funding, size, location, related resources, etc.

The Task Force has contacted several emergency agencies in York Region, including:

- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Care Centre
- Vitanova Foundation
- Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and Outreach Services of York Region
- Women's Support Network of York Region
- York Region Abuse Program
- Sandgate Women's Shelter of Georgina
- Yellow Brick House
- Porter Place Family Shelter
- VICARS – Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Service
- York Region Youth Shelter

As a result, the Task Force has identified the following:

- Consulted agencies verified that the incidence of domestic violence in Vaughan is comparable to that in any other municipality in Ontario.
- The shelter needs of domestic violence victims are not being adequately addressed, due to lack of funding that results in insufficient shelter spaces, and consequent waiting lists.
- Typically, York Region is especially under-resourced in terms of this vital social service, compared to nearby Regions, with two shelters (one in Aurora, and another in Georgina), while Peel Region has four, and Durham Region has five.
- Yellow Brick House has indicated an interest in operating any shelter spaces that may be developed in Vaughan.
- The problems with respect to shelter capacity are compounded by the lack of parallel services (i.e. affordable housing, outreach counselors, interpretation services, etc.).
- The consensus is that any shelter should be safe and secure, centrally located in Vaughan, in a confidential location, and with access to public transit (or, in the alternative, some volunteer-based transport service).
- Awareness of the existence of the Task Force has been spread by local and regional media reports, and resulted in indications of widespread interest in this matter.

The study goes well beyond identifying the need for a women's shelter in Vaughan. It projects expenses of approximately \$512,000 per annum for a fifteen-bed shelter and outreach counseling services, if operated by an existing agency. A spreadsheet is attached illustrating projected costs on a *pro forma* basis.

The solution would appear to be to have an existing agency operate a shelter funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the proceeds of autonomous fundraising, at a confidential location in the City of Vaughan.

In order to proceed to the next step, it is recommended that Council receive this report.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council by serving our citizens and promoting community safety, health and wellness.

Conclusion

As directed by Council, the Mayor's Task Force on Women's Shelter Needs has investigated the matter and has identified that the needs of the women of Vaughan are not adequately being met. A final report will be forthcoming in the new year.

Attachment

1. Spreadsheet of projected costs

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Respectfully submitted by

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